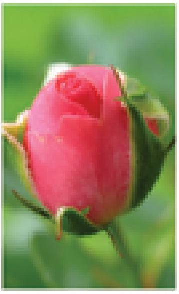
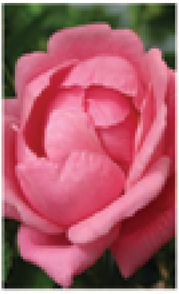
The art of interacting with people... as deduced from a study of the Prophet's ﷺ life.

A product of more than twenty years of research



Enjoy Your Life

Dr. Muhammad 'Adb Al-Rahaman Al-'Arifi

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Publisher's Foreword

It so happened that in the year 2007, I was in the city of the Prophet ﷺ. It has been my old habit that whenever I travel to a city, I always make it a point to visit all its bookstores. When it comes to books, the city of Madinah is in its own league. In the bookstores of Madinah, one is bound to come across all the newly published literature – and shopping for books is, of course, my favourite pastime. The staff who work at most of the bookstores near the Prophet's Mosque know me on a personal basis, as a large number of Darussalam's publications are available at these stores.

One day, when I was visiting one of these bookstores, I looked at the shelves and noticed a book called, '*Enjoy Your Life*'. Just as I was about to pick it up, Abu 'Abdullah greeted me, hugged me, and asked, 'When did you arrive? How long are you here for?' Meanwhile, I reached out for the book… Abu 'Abdullah, who is originally from Yemen, has been involved in the book market for a long time. He is one of the many Darussalam distributors. He noticed the book in my hand and said, 'This book is excellent. If you were to publish its translation, it would be considered a valuable addition to the international Islamic book collection.' He continued as he held my hand, 'This book has made a record

number of sales.'

Some time later, in my hotel room, I began reading the book. As I continued reading, I became more and more captivated by it. There is no doubt that the subject of the book itself was the thing that most interested me.

Solutions to all the problems of the Muslim nation are present in the life of Allah's Messenger ﷺ. His life is certainly an example for us to follow and a model for us to refer to at all times. No matter what problem arises in our lives, if we look to the Prophet's Seerah for a solution, we will surely find it. What makes this book outstanding is that it deals with our social problems in light of the Prophetic lifestyle. The work is filled with incidents from the Seerah, Islamic history, and the author's own experiences. By reading this book and implementing it practically, all of us can make our lives more enjoyable and more tranquil.

This book includes remedies for despondency and numerous tips on how to keep worries and stress at bay. The author of this book, Dr. Muhammad bin 'Abd ar-Rahman al-'Arifi is a well known scholar and lecturer from Saudi Arabia. His audiences are left mesmerised during his lectures as he has such a unique way of speaking that even us, the non-Arabs, are enchanted by his words. A visit to any of the Islamic audiocassette shops in this land gives proof to the popularity of this talented lecturer, and a single hearing of any of his lectures guarantees addiction!

When I returned to Riyadh from Madinah, I requested one of our Egyptian Darussalam associates, Muhammad Shakir Qadhi, to establish contact with Dr. Al-'Arifi and to request permission

for the translation of his book. After a few days, we managed to establish contact with Dr. Al-'Arifi. Fortunately, for us, he was already familiar with Darussalam. As he said himself, most of the books he takes on his international travels are of Darussalam publications. It is always easier to work towards an agreement if there is preceding familiarity. We invited Dr. Al-'Arifi over to Darussalam's headquarters for a visit, and he gladly accepted the invitation. Thus, we had the pleasure of his company.

I found him to be just as handsome and immaculate as are his works and lectures. He has a unique and charming character and a very humble personality. I know from my experience with people in the Islamic world, that the more famous and well respected a person becomes, the more modest and noble is his behaviour. Dr. Al-'Arifi signed the contract with Darussalam and then excused himself, saying he was in a hurry and that he would return soon to discuss further details.

After a couple of weeks or so, as I was travelling once again to Madinah, I coincidently noticed Dr. Al-'Arifi seated on the same plane. As the seat besides him was empty, we had the opportunity to sit together and familiarise ourselves with each other even more. We spoke at length and felt closer to one another. A few days later, he returned to Darussalam and gave us a number of new suggestions. We introduced him to some of our projects, and it was then decided that Darussalam would translate his books into various languages.

He explained how his book, 'Enjoy Your Life' is in reality a summary of his entire life experience. He spent a considerable amount of time authoring this book. There is no doubt that he

wrote this work from the very depths of his heart, and one really must read it to realise and acknowledge the beauty of it. This book was published in Arabic in Sha'ban 1428AH, corresponding to August 2007, and within the span of one year, it had sold 100,000 copies.

As mentioned previously, Dr. Muhammad al-'Arifi is indigenously from Saudi Arabia. He is from the famous Arab tribe known as Banu Khalid (Banu Makhzum) – it goes without mentioning that Banu Khalid are the descendants of the famous soldier, Mujahid and Companion of the Prophet, Khalid bin al-Walid – may Allah be pleased with him. Dr. Muhammad bin 'Abd ar-Rahman al-'Arifi was born in the year 1970. He graduated from Saudi universities where he acquired his PhD. The title of his PhD research thesis was "Ara' Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyya fi al-Sufiyya – Jam' wa Dirasah" (The Views of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah on Sufism – a Compilation and Study).

Currently, he is a founding and dignitary member of various Da'wah organisations, as well as being a member of their advisory committees. He is also a member of the advisory board for many international organisations. Aside from being a visiting professor in various Saudi and foreign universities, he is also a professor in King Saud University of Riyadh. He has been delivering Friday sermons for over twenty years in different mosques in Saudi Arabia. Currently, he delivers his Friday sermons in al-Bawaardi mosque, which is a major mosque located in the south of Riyadh. Every Friday, so many people attend, that it is impossible to find a parking space anywhere in the vicinity of the mosque. Once I had the opportunity of praying the Friday prayer behind Dr. Al-

‘Arifi. We arrived at the mosque very early, but despite that, we had to park very far away. The ground floor of the mosque was fully occupied, so we went up to the first floor where we were able to find a place to sit. Soon afterwards, the first floor also became congested with worshippers. Dr. Muhammad al-‘Arifi is an amazing orator. He was fortunate enough to be a student of Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz bin Baz for fifteen to sixteen years, and from whom he learnt Tafseer and Fiqh. For eight years, he took lessons from Dr. ‘Abdullah al-Jibrin in Tawheed. His other teachers include, Shaykh ‘Abdullah bin Qu’ud, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahman bin Nasir al-Barrak and various other scholars. His connections with the scholars of Madinah go back very far. During his days as a student and thereafter, he learnt Fiqh from those scholars. He has memorised the Qur’an and is known for his fine recitation. He takes a special interest in Hadeeth literature and has received licences for the chains of transmission for various Hadeeth texts from a number of scholars.

More than twenty of his works in Arabic have been published and distributed in nearly a million copies. His books, which are often published in four colours, are attractive and pleasing to the eye, and available at low-cost. It is because his books deal with issues affecting the lives of everyday people, that they are acclaimed and appreciated by all. Many well-wishers make his books their choice for their donations and free distributions.

The following is a list of some of the works of Dr. Muhammad al-‘Arifi:

- A work on Tawheed called Irkab Ma’ana, an excellent work of which 400,000 copies have been published.

- A work on Da'wah to Allah, called Hal Tabhath 'an Wadhifa, of which 150,000 copies have been published.

- Innaha Malikah, in 150,000 copies.

- Fi Batn al-Hut, in 150,000 copies.

- A work on the topic of worship in 100,000 copies.

- A work on the topic of Hijaab called Sarkha fi Mat'am al-Jami'a, in 150,000 copies.

- Rihla Ila al-Sama' with 150,000 copies published and sold.

- A compilation of counselling to doctors and patients called 'Ashiq fi Ghurfat al-'Amaliyat in 70,000 copies.

- A pamphlet called Adhkar al-Muslim al-Yawmiyyah, of which 20 million copies have been published within only three years.

Many of Dr. al-'Arifi's lectures are available on the internet without charge; he also writes columns and essays for various newspapers and magazines and has appeared on a number of Arabic satellite television channels.

The administration of Darussalam hopes, in the very near future, to translate into different languages and publish the various works of Dr. Al-'Arifi while maintaining a high literary standard, Allah willing.

I would like to thank our brothers Saleem Beg and Nasim Chowdhury for translating and editing this work respectively. We pray to Allah that He grants the author, the translator and the editor good health and long life, and that He blesses their knowledge and actions. We would be extremely delighted to

receive any feedback or suggestions from our readers, and we hope you remember us in your prayers.

Your loving brother

'Abdul-Malik Mujahid

Darussalam Publishers

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Introduction

All praise is due to Allah. May Allah's peace and blessings be upon the one after whom there is no other prophet.

As a seventeen year old, I came across a book called, 'How to Win Friends and Influence People' by Dale Carnegie, which I found to be quite excellent and which I subsequently read several times. The author suggested that one should read the book once a month, which is exactly what I did. I began to apply its principles when dealing with others and witnessed amazing results.

Carnegie would often mention a principle and then cite various examples of this by way of incidents related to prominent figures, such as Roosevelt, Lincoln, Joseph, and so on.

I contemplated and realised that the author's only goal was to attain worldly happiness. What if he were to have known Islam and the etiquettes it teaches? He would surely have achieved eternal as well as ephemeral happiness! How about if he were to have turned his wonderful interpersonal skills into worship, with which he would have drawn closer to Allah? When I later discovered that Carnegie had committed suicide, I knew for certain that his book, despite its merits, had not benefitted him.

I then began to search our own history and discovered that the life of Allah's Messenger ﷺ, his Companions, and anecdotes of some of the prominent men of this ummah are more than enough for us to learn lessons from. From then on, I began to author this book concerning the art of dealing with others. Hence, this book is not the product of a month or a year's toil. Rather, it is the result of twenty years of serious study.

Although Allah has blessed me with the ability to have produced twenty books so far, some of which have been printed in their millions, I nevertheless believe that the most beloved, precious and beneficial of all of them to me is this book, which I wrote with ink blended with my blood; I poured out my soul and squeezed out my memories as I wrote these lines.

I have written these words from the very depths of my heart so it may penetrate the heart of the reader, and would be delighted to learn that he or she has indeed implemented its teachings, experienced an improvement in his or her skills, and therefore actually began enjoying life. If he or she were to then thankfully write a message expressing his or her views and feelings honestly and send it to me via email or SMS, I would be grateful for this kindness and remember to pray for him or her in their absence.

I pray to Allah that the reader benefits from these pages, and that He makes my efforts purely for His sake.

Written by the one who is always praying for what is best for you.

Dr. Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Rahman al-'Arifi

(1)

They did not benefit

I remember once receiving a message on my mobile phone which read: "Dear Shaykh, what is the ruling on suicide?"

I called the sender to find a very young man on the other end of the line. I said, "I am sorry, I didn't understand your question. Can you please repeat your question?"

He said with a grieving voice, "The question is clear. What is the ruling on suicide?"

I decided to surprise him by saying in response something unexpected, so I said, "It is recommended!"

He screamed, "What?!"

I said, "How about if we discuss the best way for you to do it?"

The young man fell silent. I said to him, "OK. Why do you want to commit suicide?"

He said, "Because, I can't find work. People do not love me. In fact, I am an utter failure...", and thus he began to relate to me his long story in order to prove that he had failed to develop his interpersonal skills and was unsuccessful in utilising his talents. This is a problem with many people. Why do some of us feel

inferior? Why do we look at those at the peak of the mountain while thinking of ourselves as unworthy of reaching that peak as they have, or even climbing it as they did?

The one frightened of climbing mountains

forever lives in the ditches

Do you wish to know who will not benefit from this book, or any other similar book, for that matter? It is the unfortunate one who surrenders to his own errors and becomes satisfied with his limited skills, and says, "This is my nature. I have become too used to it now; I cannot change my ways. Everyone knows this is how I am. I can never speak like Khalid does, or have a cheerful countenance like Ahmad has, or be universally loved the way Ziyad is. That would be impossible."

I once sat with a very old man in a public gathering. Most of those present were people with the usual skills and abilities. The old man was busy speaking to whoever was sitting next to him. He did not stand out in the crowd for any reason, except by virtue of his old age.

I delivered a lecture and during it mentioned a verdict given by the eminent Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz bin Baz. When I finished, the old man said to me with pride, "Shaykh Ibn Baz and I were colleagues. We used to study together in a mosque under Shaykh Muhammad bin Ibrahim, about forty years ago."

I turned around to look at him and noticed that he seemed very happy to share this information with me. He was delighted to have accompanied a successful man once in his life. I said to myself, "Poor man! Why did you not become as successful as Ibn Baz? If you knew the way to success, why did you not pursue it?

Why is it that when Ibn Baz passes away, people cry for him from the pulpits, mihrabs, and institutes, and various nations grieve over the loss; yet, when your death comes, perhaps, nobody would shed a single tear, except out of kindness or custom!"

We all may say at some time or another, "We knew so-and-so and we sat with so-and-so." But this is nothing to be proud of. What one can be proud of is to scale the peak as they did.

Be brave and from now on be determined to utilise all the abilities you possess. Be successful. Replace the frown on your face with a smile, depression with cheerfulness, miserliness with generosity, and anger with perseverance. Turn your calamities into occasions of joy and your faith into a weapon!

Enjoy your life, for it is brief and there is no time in it for anguish. As for how to do this, then this is the reason for my writing this book. So bear with me until the end, with Allah's permission.

You will bear with us if...

You are brave enough to be determined and persistent on the development of your interpersonal skills, and if you are willing to take advantage of your abilities and talents.

(2)

What are we going to learn?

People generally tend to share their moments of happiness and sorrow. They are happy when they become wealthy. They will be joyous when promoted at work, content when they recover from illness, and cheerful when the world smiles at them and fulfils their dreams.

Likewise, they all grieve over illness, disgrace and loss of wealth. Knowing this to be the case, let us look for ways in which to make our joy everlasting and hence overpower our sorrows. Yes, in reality life tends to be both sweet and bitter, and on this we would not disagree, but why do we often focus on our calamities and sorrows, and as a result become depressed for days on end? Where an hour is enough to grieve over something, hours on end are spent grieving. Why?

I realise that sorrow and anguish enter our hearts without seeking permission, but for each door of sadness that opens there are a thousand means of shutting it, and these are what we will expound here.

Allow me to bring your attention to another matter: How often is it that we see those people who are loved by everyone? Many long to meet them and be in their company, but do you

not wish to be one of them? Why be content at being amazed by such people all the time? Why not try to be amazing yourself?

Here we will learn how to be amazing.

Why was it that when your cousin spoke at the gathering, everyone listened to him attentively? Why were they amazed at his manners of speech? Why was it that when you spoke, they all turned away and began to talk amongst themselves? Why was that? You may be more well-informed, better qualified and possess a higher status than him. How then did he manage to get all the attention and you failed?

Why is it that one father is dearly loved by his children who love to greet him and accompany him wherever he goes, while another father begs his children to accompany him while they keep making all kinds of excuses to avoid doing so?

Are they not both fathers? Then why the difference?

Here we will learn how to enjoy life, know the various techniques to attract people, influence them, persevere with their faults, deal with people with bad manners, and much, much more. So, welcome!

A word...

Success is not to discover what others like, it is to acquire and practise the skills that help one gain their love.

(3)

Why do we search for skills?

I once visited a deprived town to deliver a lecture, after which there came to me a teacher from outside the town. He said, "I hope you can help us finance some students."

I said, "Strange! Aren't the schools government funded, and therefore free?"

He said, "Indeed they are, but we would like to fund their university education."

I said, "Well, the universities are also government funded. They even offer student grants."

He said, "Allow me to explain to you..."

"Go ahead", I said.

He said, "Our students graduate from their secondary school with no less than 99%. They are so clever that if their intelligence was divided amongst the ummah, it would suffice! But when a student becomes determined to travel outside his town to study Medicine, Engineering, Islamic Law, Computer Science or anything else, his father prevents him from going, saying, 'What you know is sufficient! Now, remain with me and be a shepherd!'"

I screamed impulsively, "Be a shepherd?!"

He said, "Yes, a shepherd!"

And indeed, the poor boy stays with his father and becomes a shepherd, whilst all his abilities are wasted. Years go by and he remains a shepherd. He may even get married and have children whom he may treat exactly as he was treated by his father. Hence, all his children also become shepherds!

I asked, "So what's the solution?"

He said, "The solution is to convince the father to employ someone as a shepherd for a few hundred riyals, which we will pay, and allow his son to take full advantage of his skills and abilities. Of course, we will also continue to fund his son until he graduates."

The teacher then lowered his head and said, "It is inexcusable that such skills and talents in people are wasted when they long to utilise them."

I contemplated upon what he had said and realised that we cannot reach the pinnacle except by taking advantage of the abilities we have and acquiring those that we do not.

Yes, I would challenge anyone to find a successful person, be they successful in academia, preaching, lecturing, business, medicine, engineering, or influencing others; or be they successful in family life, such as a successful father with his children, or a successful wife with her husband; or be they successful in their social life, such as a person who is successful with his neighbours and colleagues – and I mean a truly successful person, not one who simply climbs upon others' shoulders! – I would challenge anyone to find me any such highly successful person who does not practise certain interpersonal skills through which he has

been able to achieve such success, whether they realise it or not.

Some people may exercise such interpersonal skills instinctively, while others may have to learn them in order to be successful, and these latter people are the types of successful personalities whose lives we would like to study and whose methods we would closely seek to follow in order to discover how they were successful, and to find out whether or not we can take their route to success.

A while ago, I listened to an interview with one of the most affluent people in the world, Shaykh Sulayman al-Rajihi, and found him to be a mountain in terms of his manners and thoughts. This man owns billions, possesses immense real estate, has built hundreds of mosques, and has sponsored thousands of orphans. He is hugely successful. He spoke of his humble beginnings around fifty years ago, when he was a regular person who would only have enough money to feed himself for the day, and sometimes not even that. He mentioned that he would sometimes clean people's houses to feed himself and continue working at night at a shop or money exchange. He discussed how he was once at the bottom of the mountain, and how he continued to climb until he reached the summit.

I thought about the abilities and skills he possesses and realised that many of us are well capable of being like him, if Allah grants us the ability. If one learns these skills, exercises them, perseveres and remains steadfast, then yes, he can surely be like him.

Another reason for us to search for these skills is that some

of us may have certain abilities, which we remain unaware of, or which nobody has assisted us in discovering, such as the skills of delivering a lecture, business acumen, or possessing general knowledge.

One may discover these skills on his own, through a teacher's or a work colleague's help, or even through a sincere brother, however few they may be! However, these skills may remain buried inside the person until his personality becomes as stale as anyone else's, and this is when we all lose out on another leader, lecturer or scholar, or perhaps a successful husband, or a caring father.

Here we will mention certain skills which we would like to remind you of if you already possess them, or which we would like to train you in if you don't. So come along!

A thought...

When you climb a mountain, look to the top and not to the rocks that surround you. Make sure of where you step as you climb, and do not leap in case you loose your footing.

(4)

Improve yourself

You sit with someone who is twenty years old and notice that he has particular etiquettes, logic and thought. You then sit with him when he is thirty to discover that he is exactly the way he was ten years ago and has not improved at all. Yet, you sit with others and you feel that they are actually taking benefit from their lives. You discover that they improve themselves on a daily basis. In fact, not an hour passes except that they improve either religiously or otherwise. If you wish to ponder upon the different types of people with respect to self-improvement, then think about the following:

There are those who like to watch those satellite television channels that help their general knowledge and intelligence grow. They benefit from other people's experiences by watching constructive discussions, from which they learn the characteristics of debating and improve their language, understanding, and expertise in debate and persuasion.

Then there are those who cannot miss out on a series about a failed love story, or an emotional play, or a horror film, or films about useless fantasies with no link to reality at all.

Notice the difference between the two after five or ten years.

Which of the two would have improved the most in his skills and ability to fathom information, gain general knowledge, have the power to convince others, or successfully be able to cope with diverse situations? No doubt the first person! You will find the mannerisms of the first person to be completely different.

When he argues, he does so on the basis of legal references, facts and figures, while the second can only quote the words of actors and singers, so much so that one such person once said during a discussion, "Allah says: 'Strive, my servant, and I shall strive with you!"

We informed him that this is not a verse from the Qur'an. His complexion changed and he fell silent. I then thought about the phrase and it occurred to me that it is an Egyptian idiom which was imprinted on his mind after watching a drama series!

Let's look at it from another angle – that of reading newspapers and magazines. How many people take an interest in reading beneficial news and information that helps them in developing their personality, improves their skills and increases their general knowledge? Yet, how many are those who cannot read except sports and entertainment news? This is true to such an extent that many newspapers compete with each other by increasing the sports and entertainment pages at the cost of other sections. The same can be said about our gatherings and the things in which we spend our time.

Hence, if you would like to be a head instead of a tail, then eagerly try to practice all skills, regardless of what they may be. 'Abdullah was an energetic person but lacking in certain skills. One day, he left his home to pray Dhuhr in the mosque. It was

his zeal for the prayer and respect for his religion which brought him out to pray. He was walking fast in order to reach the mosque before the Iqamah was given. On his way, he passed by a date-palm tree on top of which there was a man in uniform, working on the tree. 'Abdullah became surprised and thought, "Who is this man that does not care about the prayer! It is as if he didn't even hear the Adhan, or doesn't care about the Iqamah, which is about to go!"

He shouted in anger, "Get down and pray!"

The man responded coldly, "OK, OK..."

He said, again, "Hurry up and pray, you donkey!"

The man screamed, "You called me a donkey?!" He then took a branch of the tree and descended in order to hit him over the head with it! 'Abdullah hid his face with his headscarf so the man wouldn't recognise him and went on to the mosque. The man descended from the tree in anger, went to his house, prayed and rested for a while. He then returned to the tree to finish his job. Then 'Asr time came and 'Abdullah went to the mosque again. On his way he passed by the same tree and noticed the same man working. He decided to change his method altogether and said, 'As-salamu 'alaykum! How are you?"

The man replied, "Al-hamdulillah, I am fine!"

He said, "Give me some good news. How are the dates this year?"

The man said, "Al-Hamdulillah."

'Abdullah said, "May Allah give you success and provision, make your life easy for you, and not deprive you of the reward

for your work!"

The man was overjoyed at hearing this supplication and said ameen to the prayer.

'Abdullah then said, "It seems that you are so preoccupied with work that perhaps you didn't notice the Adhan for 'Asr prayer. The Adhan has been called and the Iqamah is about to be given. Perhaps you should get down, relax a little and get ready for prayer. After the prayer you can get on with your work again. May Allah keep you healthy."

The man said, "InshaAllah... InshaAllah..." and began to descend gently.

He then turned to 'Abdullah, shook his hand warmly and said, "I would like to thank you for your excellent manners. As for the one who passed by me at Dhuhr time, I wish I could see him and show him who the real donkey is!"

The result...

Your skills of dealing with others determine how they deal with you.

(5)

Do not cry over spilt milk

Some people believe that the traits they have been nurtured on, which they are recognised by and which have left a certain impression about them on the minds of others can never be changed. They surrender to this thought, just as a person would surrender to the fact that he cannot change his height or skin colour.

On the other hand, an intelligent person thinks that to change one's nature can perhaps be easier than changing his clothes. Our nature is not like spilt milk that cannot be scooped up again. Rather, we are always in control of it and there are certain ways in which we can alter it, and even the way we think!

Ibn Hazm mentions in his work Tawq al-Hamamah a tale of a famous Spanish businessman: There was competition between him and four other businessmen and as a result, they disliked him. They were therefore determined to aggravate him. One morning, he left his house to go to his workplace, wearing a white shirt and turban. One of the four businessmen met him on the way. He greeted the Spanish businesman, looked at his turban and said, "How beautiful this yellow turban is!"

The businessman said, "Are you blind? This turban is white!"

He replied, "No, it is yellow! It is yellow, but it looks good."

The businessman left him and moved on until he met the second of them. He greeted him, then looked at his turban and said, "You look handsome today! Your clothes look fine! Especially this green turban!"

The businessman said, "Actually, the turban is white."

"No, it is green," he insisted.

He replied, "It is white! Go away from me!"

The businessman walked on, talking to himself, and every now and then looking at the flank of his turban to make sure that it was indeed white. He reached his shop and opened up the lock. Meanwhile, there came to him the third of the four businessmen and said, "How beautiful this morning is! And especially your clothes, they look fine! And your beautiful blue turban only adds to your good looks!"

The businessman looked at his turban to ascertain its colour, then rubbed his eyes and said, "Dear brother! My turban is white!"

"No, it is blue. But the important thing is that it looks good, so don't worry!" the man said, and left, as the businessman began to yell after him saying, "The turban is white!" as he looked at his turban to ascertain its colour once again.

He sat in his shop for a while and couldn't take his eyes off his turban. Meanwhile, the fourth person came and said, "Greetings! MashaAllah! From where did you buy this red turban?"

The businessman shouted, "My turban is blue!"

He replied, "No, it is red."

The businessman said, "No, it is green! Actually, no, it is white! No, it is blue, or black!" He then laughed out loud, then screamed, then began to cry and then started to jump up and down!

Ibn Hazm said, 'Thereafter, I would see him in the streets of Spain. He had gone mad and children would pelt stones at him.'

If these four people, by using their skills, were able to change not only the nature of the person but also his mind, then how about the tried and tested skills that are supported by revelation which a person can put into practice in order to become closer to Allah?

Put into practice whatever good skills you come across and you will be happy.

If you say to me, "I cannot."

I would say to you, "At least try!"

If you say to me, "I don't know how."

I would say, "Yes, you do!"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Knowledge is only gained through learning, and clemency is only gained through perseverance."

A point of view...

The hero is the one who goes beyond his ability to improve his skills, until he becomes able to improve, and perhaps even alter, the skills of others.

(6)

Be unique

Why is it that some people's discussions end in argument while others may discuss the same subject and end their discussion in a friendly manner? It has everything to do with the skills of holding a discussion.

Why is it that when two people deliver the same sermon with the same words, you find that among the audience of the first person someone is yawning or sleeping, another is playing with a prayer mat, and others are repeatedly shifting, whilst the audience listening to the second are listening attentively to the sermon, such that they cannot even blink an eyelid nor of what is being said? It has everything to do with oratory skills.

Why is it when so-and-so speaks in a gathering, everyone listens to him attentively and focuses on him, whereas when someone else speaks, they began to talk about other side issues and start reading their text messages? It has everything to do with the skills of verbal communication.

Why is it when one school teacher walks through the corridor, all the students gather around him? One shaking his hand, another asking his advice, and yet another one complaining about a problem; if he were to sit in his office and allow the students

to enter, it would be filled with students in seconds as everyone wishes to sit with him. Yet, another teacher walks through the corridor by himself and leaves the school's mosque and he is alone. No student approaches him to shake his hand, or to complain about a problem. If he were to leave his office open from sunrise to sunset, no one would ever come to it as nobody seems to like to be in his company.

Why?

It has everything to do with interpersonal skills.

One person enters a public gathering and everyone smiles at his face and feels joy at meeting him; everyone wishes to sit next to him. However, another person walks in and gets cold handshakes, either out of custom or kindness. He then looks for a place to sit but cannot find a person who gives him any space or calls him to sit next to him.

Why?

It has everything to do with the techniques of attracting and influencing others.

Why is it that a father enters his house and his children smile at him with joy, whereas another comes to see his children but they do not even turn to acknowledge his presence? It is all to do with the skills of dealing with children. You can say the same about the mosque, wedding parties and so on.

People differ in varying degrees from each other in terms of their interpersonal skills, and, accordingly, the way they are treated by others also differs to varying degrees. Influencing people and earning their love is easier than one can imagine. I am

not exaggerating when I say this, since I have tried these skills a number of times and found that it is very easy to capture people's hearts, if indeed we are serious about interpersonal skills and training ourselves in them.

People are affected by the way we deal with them whether we realise it or not. For thirteen years, I have been an Imam at a military college. On my way to the mosque, I pass by a gate that is watched by a guard.

When I pass by the guadr, I am always eager to smill at him and signal with my hand by way of giving my salams to him. After the Salah, I get in my car and make my way hom. Usually, whilst I am doing my Salah in the mosque, I recieve a number of next rebages and missed calls, on my cell phone. When I pass by the great on my way back from the salah, I am preoccupied with ??? the message, so I forgot to smile at him.

Until, one day I was surprised when he stopped me and said, "Dear Shaykh, are you upset with me?"

"Why would I be?" I asked.

He said, "When you enter I noticed that you smile and you seem very happy. But when you leave, you neither smile nor seem pleased."

The man was very sincere, so he began to swear how much he loved and respected me, and how joyful he was upon seeing me. I apologised to him and explained to him the reason for my behaviour.

I then realised that when we get used to such skills, they become part of our nature, and others certainly notice when we

negligently fail to practise them.

Enlightenment...

Do not earn wealth and lose people, for earning people is a way to earning wealth.

(7)

Who is the most beloved to you?

You will become the most proficient in using the various skills in dealing with others when you treat everyone in such a way that he thinks of himself as the most beloved of all people to yourself. For instance, you should treat your mother so grandly that she begins to think you have never treated anyone in such a fine manner.

You can say the same about the way you should deal with your father, your wife, your children, and your colleagues. In fact, you can say the same about someone you meet only once, such as a shopkeeper, or a petrol station attendant. You could get all these people to agree that you are the most beloved of all to them, if only you can make them feel that they are the most beloved of all to you!

The Prophet ﷺ was an expert in this.

Whoever reads about the life of the Prophet ﷺ will find that he would deal with everyone in an excellent manner. Whoever he met, he would be very welcoming and cheerful, such that the person would think that he was the most beloved of all to him, and therefore, the Prophet ﷺ would also become the most beloved of all to that person.

The shrewdest of the Arabs were four, and ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas was deemed one of them due to his wisdom, sharpness and intelligence. When ‘Amr embraced Islam, he was the leader amongst his people, and whenever he met the Prophet ﷺ, he would always find him very warm and cheerful. Whenever he entered a gathering where the Prophet ﷺ was sitting, he would be warmly welcomed. When the Prophet ﷺ would call him, he would use the names that were most beloved to him.

By experiencing such excellent treatment, he felt certain that he was the most beloved of all to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. One day, he decided to confirm his feelings, so he approached the Prophet ﷺ and sat next to him.

He said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, who is the most beloved to you?’

He said, “A’ishah.”

‘Amr said, “No. I mean, from the men, O Messenger of Allah. I do not mean from amongst your family.”

He said, “Her father.”

‘Amr said, “And then?”

He said, “Umar bin al-Khattab.”

‘Amr said, “And then?”

The Prophet ﷺ then began to mention a number of people saying, “So-and-so and so-and-so...” in accordance with how early they had embraced Islam and the sacrifices they had made.

‘Amr then said, “I then remained silent, fearing that he may rank me last!”

Notice how the Prophet ﷺ managed to capture 'Amr's heart by exercising his outstanding skills. In fact, the Prophet ﷺ would rank people according to their worth. Sometimes, he would even leave what he was doing to tend to other's needs, just to make them feel that they were loved and held in high regard.

When the Prophet's influence extended after his conquests and Islam had spread far and wide, the Prophet ﷺ began sending preachers to various tribes to call them to Islam. Sometimes he even had to send armies. 'Adi bin Hatim al-Ta'i was a king and the son of a king. When the Prophet ﷺ sent an army to the Tai' tribe, 'Adi ran away from the battle and took refuge in Syria. When the Muslim army reached Tai' they found it easy to defeat them as they had neither a king nor an organised army. The Muslims would always treat people kindly in wars and respect their emotions, even during battle. The purpose of the battle was to prevent the plots of 'Adi's people against the Muslims and to display to them the Muslims' strength. The Muslims captured some people from 'Adi's tribe, amongst whom was 'Adi's sister. They took the captives to the Prophet ﷺ in Madinah and informed him about 'Adi's escape to Syria. The Prophet ﷺ was surprised, thinking how could he have run away from the ture religion? How could he have left his people behind?

However, there was no way for the Muslims to contact 'Adi. 'Adi himself did not enjoy his stay in Syria and was compelled to come back to the Arab lands. He then could not but help go to Madinah to meet with the Prophet ﷺ and make peace with him, or to create some sort of understanding. (It is also claimed that his sister went to Syria to bring him back to the Arabs).

'Adi said whilst relating his story, "None from the Arabs disliked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ as much as I did. I was a Christian and a king amongst my people. When I heard about the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, I despised him and left my people to go to Caesar of Rome. But I disliked staying there, too. So I thought that if I went to this man and he turned out to be a liar, then he wouldn't be able to harm me, and if he was truthful, then I would know. So I decided to go to him…"

"When I arrived in Madinah, the people began to say, 'This is 'Adi bin Hatim! This is 'Adi bin Hatim!' I continued to walk until I reached the Messenger of Allah ﷺ who said to me: "Adi bin Hatim?'

I said: 'Adi bin Hatim'." The Prophet ﷺ became overjoyed by his arrival and welcomed him, even though 'Adi had previously fought against the Muslims, ran away from the battle, despised Islam and sought refuge amongst the Christians. Despite all of that the Prophet ﷺ met him with a smile and took him by his hand to his house. As 'Adi walked alongside the Prophet ﷺ, he considered him to be completely equal to himself, since Muhammad ﷺ was the ruler of Madinah and its outskirts while 'Adi was the ruler over the Ta'i mountains and its outskirts. Muhammad ﷺ was a follower of a heavenly religion – Islam, just as 'Adi was a follower of a heavenly religion – Christianity. Muhammad ﷺ had a revealed scripture – the Qur'an, just as 'Adi had a revealed scripture - the Gospel. 'Adi thought that there was no difference between the two except in terms of power and military might.

While they were on their way, three things happened. As they were walking, a woman came and began to shout in the

middle of their path, "O Messenger of Allah! I need your help!" The Prophet ﷺ left 'Adi's hand and went to the woman to listen to what she had to say. 'Adi bin Hatim –who had witnessed many kings and leaders - as he watched this happen, began to compare this with what he knew of the actions of kings and ministers. He thought for a while, until it occurred to him that these mannerisms were not that of kings, but rather of the Prophets!

When the woman's need was fulfilled, the Prophet ﷺ came back to 'Adi and they both continued to walk, and as they did, a man came to the Prophet ﷺ. What did he say? Did he say, "O Messenger of Allah! I have surplus wealth and am looking to give some to a poor person?" Did he say, "I harvested my crops and I have some extra fruit. What shall I do with it?" If only he were to have asked such questions so that 'Adi would have felt that the Muslims had wealth.

Instead, the man said, "O Messenger of Allah! I complain to you about hunger and poverty." The man was unable to find anything with which to abate his and his children's hunger, whilst the Muslims around him could barely get by, and hence, were unable to help him.

'Adi was listening as the man asked the Prophet ﷺ his question. The Prophet ﷺ then responded to him, after which he left. When they continued to walk, there came another man who said, "O Messenger of Allah! I complain to you about highway robbers!" Meaning, "O Messenger of Allah! We have numerous enemies surrounding us and therefore cannot safely leave the walls of our city due to the disbelievers and thieves." The Prophet ﷺ responded to him with a few words and continued. 'Adi began

to think about what he had seen. He himself was honoured by his people, and he didn't have any enemies waiting to attack him. Why then were so many people accepting this religion whilst they were weak and poor?

They both reached the Prophet's house and entered. Inside there was only one couch available so the Prophet ﷺ gave it to 'Adi in his honour, saying, "Take this to sit on." 'Adi gave it back to him and said, "Rather, you should sit on it." The Prophet ﷺ said, "Rather, you should sit on it." 'Adi then did as he was told.

Then the Prophet ﷺ began to break down all the barriers that existed between 'Adi and Islam. He said, "O 'Adi, accept Islam and you will be safe."

'Adi said, "I already have a religion."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "I know more about your religion than you do."

He said, "You know more about my religion than I do?"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Yes! Are you not from the Rukusiyya?"

Rukusiyya was a sub-sect within Christianity with elements of Zoarastianism. It was become of his skills of persuasion that the Prophet ﷺ did not ask, "Are you a Christian?" Rather, he circumvented this fact and mentioned something more particular, i.e. the sub-sect of Christianity which he belonged to.

This is just as if you were to meet someone in a European country who said to you, "Why don't you become a Christian?"

And you were to say to him, "I already have a religion."

And he didn't reply with, "Are you a Muslim?" or even, "Are you a Sunni?" But rather, with, "Are you a Shafi'i or a Hanbali?" You would then realise that he knows much about your religion.

This is exactly what the Prophet ﷺ did with 'Adi by asking, "Are you not from the Rakusiyya?"

"Indeed, I am," replied 'Adi.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "When you go to war, do you not share one quarter of your people's gains?'

He said, 'Yes, I do."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "This is not allowed in your religion."

"Adi admitted in embarrassment, 'Yes."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "I know what is preventing you from accepting Islam. You think that the only people to follow this man (i.e., himself) are the oppressed people who have no strength: the Arabs have discarded them. O 'Adi! Have you heard of al-Hira (a city in 'Iraq)?"

'Adi said, "I haven't seen it but I have heard of it."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "I swear by the One who has my soul in His Hand, Allah will complete this affair, until a woman travels from al-Hira to make Tawaf around the Ka'bah, without fearing anyone." Meaning: Islam will one day become so strong that a woman would be able to travel from al-Hira to Makkah without a male guardian and without any need for protection. She would pass by hundreds of tribes and no one would dare to harm her or take her wealth. This is because the Muslims will become so strong that no one would dare to trouble a Muslim from fear of

other Muslims rushing to his or her help.

When 'Adi heard this, he began to picture this in his mind – a woman leaving 'Iraq and reaching Makkah, i.e. approaching from the north of the peninsula, and passing by the Ta'i mountains where his people reside.

'Adi became amazed and said to himself, "What will the bandits do who terrorise us and the rest of our cities?!"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "You will seize the treasures of Kisra bin Hurmuz."

He said, "The treasures of Ibn Hurmuz?"

Yes, "Kisra bin Hurmuz, and you will spend it all in the path of Allah. If you live long, you would see a man offering a handful of gold or silver to others but none will accept it." Meaning: wealth will be so plentiful that a rich man will look for someone to accept his charity but will not be able to find a poor person to give it to.

The Prophet ﷺ then admonished 'Adi and reminded him of the Hereafter. He said, "One of you shall meet Allah on the Last Day without anyone to translate the dialogue between you and Allah. He will look to his right and not see anything except Hell. He will then look to his left and not see anything except Hell."

'Adi remained silent and began to think. The Prophet ﷺ abruptly said, "O 'Adi! What is preventing you from saying: There is none worthy of worship but Allah? Do you know of a god greater than Him?"

'Adi said, "In that case, I am a monotheist Muslim; I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, and I

bear witness that Muhammad is the Servant and the Messenger of Allah!"

The Prophet's face became overjoyed.

'Adi bin Hatim later said, "I have seen a woman riding a camel travelling from Al-Hira till it made Tawaf around Ka'bah fearing none but Allâh, I have also been one of those who opened the treasures of Kisra bin Hurmuz. I swear by the One who has my soul in His Hand, the third prophecy will also be fulfilled, since Allah's Messenger has said so!" (Muslim and Ahmad)

Contemplate the way the Prophet ﷺ dealt with 'Adi, how he welcomed him, something which 'Adi no doubt felt. Think how all of his fine manners contributed to 'Adi accepting Islam. If we were to practise these skills with people, we would also successfully capture their hearts.

A thought...

With gentleness and interpersonal skills, we can achieve our objectives.

(8)

Enjoy the skills

These skills give us physical pleasure, and I do not mean by this the pleasure of the Hereafter only. Rather, it is that pleasure one actually feels in this world. So enjoy these skills and practise them with the old, young, rich, poor, near or far. Use these skills with them in order to guard yourself from their harm, to earn their love, or to rectify them.

'Ali bin al-Jahm was a very eloquent poet, but he was a Bedouin. The only life he knew was the desert life. The Caliph, al-Mutawakkil, was very powerful. People would go to visit him and return with whatever they wished. One day, 'Ali bin al-Jahm entered Baghdad and it was said to him, "Whoever praises the Caliph is bestowed with honour and gifts."

'Ali became excited and went to the Caliph's palace. There he saw the poets reciting their poems in praise of the Caliph and returning with gifts. Al-Mutawakkil was known for his authority, awe and power. 'Ali began to praise the Caliph with a poem in which he likened him to a dog, a goat and a bucket, whilst other poets likened him to the sun, the moon and the mountains!

The Caliph became angry, and his guards unsheathed their swords and prepared to strike off his neck. But then, the Caliph

realised that 'Ali bin al-Jahm was from the desert and that his personality and poetic taste was shaped accordingly. He decided to change his personality, so he ordered his men to house him in a section of the palace, be treated with kindness and be given all the available pleasures.

Al-Jahm tasted some of these bounties and sat on couches side by side with eloquent poets and authors for seven months. One day, as the Caliph was sitting in his nightly gathering, he remembered 'Ali bin al-Jahm, so he sent for him. When al-Jahm finally came to him, he said, "Sing some verses to me, O 'Ali bin al-Jahm!" Al-Jahm began to move emotions using soft and kind words, and likened the king to the sun, the stars and the sword.

Notice how the Caliph was able to change Ibn al-Jahm's personality. How often have we been upset by the bad behaviour of our children and friends? Did we ever try to change their nature successfully? Even more, you should be able to change your own personality by replacing a frowning face with a smiling one, replacing anger with forbearance, and miserliness with generosity. None of this is difficult, but it does require determination and persistence, so be brave!

Whoever reads the life of the Prophet ﷺ realises that he would deal with people with these skills and capture their hearts. The Prophet ﷺ would not simply pretend to have these skills in front of people and replace his forbearance with anger when being alone with his family. He was never one to be cheerful with some but sulky with his own family. He was never one to be generous with everyone except his own children and wives. Rather, he always acted naturally. He would worship Allah by his

fine manners just as he would worship Him by offering the Duha or night prayers. He would consider his smile to be a virtue, his gentleness an act of worship, and his forgiveness and leniency a good deed. The one who considers good manners to be acts of worship will always remain well-mannered, in war and peace, when he is hungry and when he is full, when healthy or ill, and even when happy or sad.

How many women only hear about the refined manners of their husbands, such as their patience, cheerfulness and generosity, but never witness any of these qualities at home? Such husbands, often when at home, are ill-mannered, impatient, sulky and constantly cursing.

As for the Prophet ﷺ, he said, "The best of you is the one who is best to his family. And I am the best of you to my family." (al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah, Sahih)

Now read how he would deal with his family: Al-Aswad bin Yazid said, "I asked 'A'ishah – may Allah be pleased with her – how Allah's Messenger ﷺ would behave in his house. She said: 'He would be serving his family, and when the time for prayer would come he would perform ablution and leave to pray."

The same can be said about parents. How often is it that we hear of the good manners that some display, such as generosity, cheerfulness and kind behaviour towards others, and yet with the closest people to them who have the greatest rights over them, such as their parents, wives and children, they are distant and cold.

Yes, the best of you is the best to his family, to his parents, to his wife, to his servants, and even to his children. One night,

as Abu Layla – may Allah be pleased with him – sat next to the Prophet ﷺ, there came to him, either al-Hasan or al-Husayn, so the Prophet ﷺ lifted him up and placed him on his stomach. The toddler then urinated on the Prophet's stomach. Abu Layla said, "I saw the urine trickling down from the Prophet's stomach. So we leapt up to the Prophet ﷺ, but he said: 'Leave my son alone. Do not scare him.'"

When the toddler had finished urinating, he called for some water and poured it over his stomach.' (Ahmad and al-Tabarani, with trustworthy narrators)

How amazing was the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to train and adorn himself with such manners! No wonder he was able to win the hearts of the young and old.

Opinion...

Instead of cursing the darkness, try to fix the lamp.

(9)

With the poor

Many people today view manners in a commercial light. To them, only rich people's jokes are worth laughing at, and only their faults are considered small and worthy of overlooking. As for the poor, their jokes are unbearable and only worthy of ridicule, while their faults are magnified and they are shouted down.

As for the Prophet ﷺ, his kindness extended to both rich and poor alike. Anas – may Allah be pleased with him – said, "There was a man from amongst the Bedouins whose name was Zahir bin Haram. Whenever he came to Madinah for a need, he brought something for the Prophet ﷺ as a gift, like cottage cheese or butter. Likewise, the Prophet ﷺ would prepare something to give to him whenever he wanted to leave, such as dates and so on. The Prophet ﷺ used to love him and say: "Zahir is our Bedouin and we are his city-dwellers." Zahir was not very good looking. One day, Zahir – may Allah be pleased with him – left the desert and came to Allah's Messenger ﷺ but did not find him. He had some merchandise to sell so he went on to the marketplace.

When the Prophet ﷺ found out about his arrival, he went to the marketplace looking for him. When he arrived, he saw him

selling his merchandise with sweat pouring down from his face, and he wore Bedouin clothes which did not smell good either. The Prophet ﷺ hugged him tightly from behind, while Zahir was unaware and could not see who it was.

Zahir became scared and said: "Let me go! Who is this?" But the Prophet ﷺ remained silent. Zahir tried to release himself from his grip and started to look right and left. When he saw the Prophet ﷺ he relaxed and calmed down, placing his back against the Prophet's chest. The Prophet ﷺ began to joke with him, saying to the public: "Who will buy this slave?! Who will buy this slave?!"

Thereupon, Zahir looked at himself and thought of his extreme poverty, for he had neither wealth nor good looks.

He said: "You will find me unmarketable, O Messenger of Allah."

The Prophet ﷺ said: "But you are not unmarketable with Allah. You are very precious to Allah."

It was no surprise then that the hearts of the poor were attached to the Prophet ﷺ. He would gain their respect and love by such an attitude. Many poor people may not accuse the rich of miserliness in terms of wealth and food, but they can certainly accuse them of miserliness in terms of gracious and kind treatment. How often do you smile at a poor person and make him feel he is worthy and respectable, so that perhaps at night he might supplicate for you and cause Allah's mercy to descend upon you from the heavens?

There may be a person with dishevelled hair who is rejected and not cared for, but if he ever asks Allah for something he

is always responded to. Therefore, always be humane with the weak.

A hint...

Perhaps just a smile at a poor man would raise you in rank in the sight of Allah.

(10)

With women

My grandfather used to mention an old idiom which says, "When one neglects his she-goat, she brings home a male-goat," which means that when a woman does not get her emotional needs fulfilled, she responds willingly to someone else who charms her.

The point of this idiom is not to liken the man and the woman to a male and female goat – Allah's refuge is sought! – since a woman is a man's companion. If Allah has blessed the man with a strong body, He has also blessed the woman with strong emotions. How often do we see brave men and even leaders crumble in front of the emotional prowess of a woman?

To deal skilfully with women one should discover the key to her emotions. The Prophet ﷺ would advise people to treat their womenfolk with kindness and have regard for their emotions, so that they may live with them in happiness. He advised fathers to be kind to their daughters.

"Whoever looks after two girls until they have grown up, he and I will be on the Day of Resurrection like this", said the Prophet ﷺ as he joined his fingers together.

He also advised sons to look after their mothers. He was

asked, "Who should I honour the most?"

The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Your mother, then your mother, then your mother and then your father." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

He similarly advised husbands to look after their wives, and went on to criticise those who anger or hurt their wives. Read the words the Prophet ﷺ said on his last pilgrimage in front of a hundred thousand pilgrims, amongst them white, black, old, young, rich and poor. He called out to them all and said, "You must treat your womenfolk well! You must treat your womenfolk well!" (Muslim and al-Tirmidhi)

One day, a group of women came to the wives of the Prophet ﷺ complaining about their husbands. When the Prophet ﷺ heard of this, he stood amongst the people and said, 'A group of women have approached the wives of Muhammad complaining about their husbands. These husbands are not the best of your people.' (Abu Dawud, Sahih)

He also said, "The best of you is the one who is best to his family, and I am the best of you to my family." (al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah, Sahih)

As a matter of fact, the religion of Islam has given so much respect to women that wars were initiated, flesh was sliced and heads struck off over a single one of them:

The Jews used to live side by side with the Muslims in Madinah. They hated the fact that Allah had revealed the order of hijab and that thereafter the Muslim women were covered. They tried to plant the seeds of corruption, and attempted to unveil the Muslim women, but failed.

One day, a Muslim woman went to a marketplace owned by the Jews of Banu Qaynuqa'. She was a chaste and modest woman. She visited a jeweller amongst them. The Jews saw her and disliked the fact that she was chaste and covered. They wanted to have a glimpse at her, molest her or flirt with her, as they would do before Islam honoured women. They wanted her to uncover her face and take off her hijaab, but she refused. The jeweller therefore took an end of her garment and attached it to the end of her khimar, while she was unaware. When she stood up, her garment was raised, revealing her body parts. The Jews began to laugh. The Muslim woman cried out, wishing they had killed her rather than uncovering her body.

A Muslim man saw this happen, so he brandished his sword and attacked the jeweller, killing him. In turn, the Jews attacked the Muslim and killed him. When the Prophet ﷺ came to know about this, and the fact that the Jews had violated their pledge with him, and molested a woman, he surrounded the Jews until they all surrendered and conceded to his judgement.

When the Prophet ﷺ decided to punish them in revenge for the honour of a chaste Muslim woman being violated, one of the devil's helpers stood up – those who have no concern for the honour of Muslim women and only care about satisfying their stomachs and private parts. This leader of the hypocrites, 'Abdullah bin Ubay bin Salul, stood up and said, "O Muhammad! Please, treat my allies with kindness!" He said this because they had been allied to him during the days of pre-Islamic ignorance. The Prophet ﷺ turned away from him and refused to concede, for how could he forgive a people who wished to spread corruption amongst the Believers?!

The hypocrite said again, "O Muhammad, treat them with kindness!" But the Prophet ﷺ, turned away from him, again, in favour of defending the honour of the chaste Muslim woman. The hypocrite then became angry. He placed his hand in the pocket of the Prophet's shirt and pulled him saying, "Be kind to my allies! Be kind to my allies!" The Prophet ﷺ became angry. He turned around and shouted at him, "Let go of me!" But the hypocrite refused and began to beg the Prophet ﷺ to prevent their execution.

The Prophet ﷺ turned to him and said, "They are yours, then", and decided not to execute them. However, he did expel them from their dwellings in Madinah. Yes, a chaste Muslim woman deserves no less!

Khawlah bint Tha'labah – may Allah be pleased with her – was from the righteous companions of the Prophet ﷺ. Her husband, Aws bin al-Samit, was an old man who would often become angry very quickly. One day he came back from a meeting and spoke to her regarding an issue. She responded inappropriately and they quarrelled. The man became angry and said, "You are like my mother's back!" and left the house enraged. To utter this phrase during the pre-Islamic era of ignorance was considered a divorce. This was not the case in Islam, but Khawlah did not know the Islamic ruling concerning the issue.

Aws came back to his house to find his wife avoiding him and keeping him at a distance. She said to him, "I swear by the One who has Khawlah's life in His Hand, you will never approach me after having said what you did, until Allah's Messenger gives a judgement."

Khawlah then left to visit the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and told him what had happened. She also complained to him about how she was treated by her husband. The Prophet ﷺ admonished her and advised her to remain patient, saying, "O Khawlah! He is your cousin and an old man, so fear Allah with regards to him."

She said in response, "O Messenger of Allah! He married me when I was young, my stomach became flabby due to pregnancy, and now, when I have become old and unable to have any more children, he has divorced me! O Allah! I complain to you!"

The Prophet ﷺ heard her words and waited for Allah to reveal a verdict regarding her case, and while Khawlah was with the Prophet ﷺ, there came Jibreel عليه السلام from the heavens and revealed unto the Prophet ﷺ the ruling concerning her and her husband.

The Prophet ﷺ turned to her and said, "O Khawlah! Allah has revealed a verse concerning you and your husband."

He then recited: "Allah has heard the saying of she that disputes with you (Muhammad) concerning her husband, and complains unto Allah. And Allah hears your argument. Indeed Allah is the Hearer, Knower..." until the end of the verses from the early part of Surah al-Mujadilah.

The Prophet ﷺ said to her, "Order him to free a slave."

She said, "O Messenger of Allah, he doesn't have a slave to free."

He said, "Then tell him to fast two consecutive months."

She said, "By Allah, he is an old man who doesn't have the strength to fast."

He said, "Then let him feed sixty poor people a wasq (160 kg) of dates"

She said, "O Messenger of Allah, he doesn't have that to give."

He said, "In that case, we will help him with some dates."

She said, "O Messenger of Allah, I will help him with some dates myself."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "This is very good of you. Go and give charity on his behalf, and look after your cousin." (Ahmad and Abu Dawud, Sahih)

Glory be to Allah who granted the Prophet ﷺ the quality of gentleness and leniency, even when dealing with personal problems!

I myself have exercised gentleness and emotional skills with my daughter and wife, and prior to that with my mother and sister, and I have found it to be very effective indeed. No man honours a woman except an honourable one, and no one demeans a woman except a mean person.

A point to note...

A woman can be patient with her husband's poverty, unattractiveness and busy schedule, but she cannot be patient with his rude behaviour.

(11)

With children...

How many incidents that occurred in our childhood days do we still remember up until today, be they happy or sad memories? Think about your childhood and no doubt you will remember the day you received a certificate of achievement at school, or when someone praised you in a public gathering, and so on. These are the sort of incidents that become imprinted in your memory such that you can never forget.

We likewise remember the sad memories from our childhood, such as a teacher chastising us, or a fight with a classmate, or being humiliated by a family member. How often does the good treatment of children not only affect them but also their parents and families, and it earns their love and respect? It is often the case that primary school teachers are contacted by their pupils' parents who thank them and express their love and respect merely for the fact that they love and respect their children. They may express their gratitude sometimes by words and sometimes as gifts. Therefore, do not belittle smiling at a child, winning his heart and exercising interpersonal skills with him.

I once delivered a lecture about the importance of prayer to a group of children in a school. I asked them if anyone knew of a Hadeeth concerning the importance of prayer. One of the

children responded saying, "The Prophet ﷺ has said: "Between a man and disbelief and polytheism is to abandon the prayer." I was so amazed by his response and his zeal that I instantly took off my watch and gave it to him, although, my watch wasn't anything special. This incident encouraged the child to study more eagerly and memorise the Qur'an, since he had felt self-worth.

Years passed by, I went to a mosque and was astonished to discover that the Imam of the mosque was that same child. He had grown to become a fine young man who had graduated from the Shari'ah College, and was now working in a court. Although, I did not remember him, he had remembered me. Notice how love and respect developed in his heart due to a childhood incident.

I recall being invited to a wedding ceremony once where a bright young man approached me and greeted me very warmly, and then reminded me of his childhood memories of me when I came to his school to deliver a lecture. Sometimes we even notice children who have been treated kindly by someone bringing their parents to him or her and introducing them in the hope that the parents have the same love and respect for the man or woman that they do.

I would not hide the fact that I am very kind and welcoming of children. I make it a point to attentively listen to their sweet conversations, even though they are usually of no substance. In fact, sometimes I am extremely welcoming to them simply in order to win the hearts of their parents.

I used to meet a friend of mine every now and then who would have his son with him, and I would be extremely kind and

playful with the son. One day, this friend of mine met me at a wedding party with this son. He greeted me and said, "What have you done to my son? His teacher at school asked his pupils what they would like to be when they grow up. Some said doctors, others said engineers, but my son said: 'I want to be Muhammad al-'Arifi:

You can sometimes notice the different ways in which people deal with children. When a person enters a public gathering with his son, he shakes everyone's hand one by one, while his son follows suit. Amongst the people are those who would completely ignore the child, others would barely shake his hand, and others would warmly shake his hand saying, "Welcome, young man! How are you today?" It is the love of that person that will be engraved in the heart of the child, as well as in the hearts of his parents.

The Prophet ﷺ would display the best form of treatment with children. Anas bin Malik – may Allah be pleased with him – had a younger brother, and the Prophet ﷺ would play with him and nickname him Abu 'Umayr. The child had a small bird that he played with. Whenever the Prophet ﷺ would meet him, he would joke with him saying, "O Abu 'Umayr, what happened to al-Nughayr?" meaning, the bird.

He would be kind and playful with children. Whenever he would meet Zaynab bint Umm Salamah, he would playfully say to her, "O Zuwaynib! O Zuwaynib!" Whenever he passed by children playing, he would greet them. Whenever he visited the Ansaar, he would greet their children and place his hand on their heads out of compassion. Upon the return of the Muslim army

from Mu'tah, the Prophet ﷺ along with the rest of the Muslims and their children met them on their way back to Madinah. When the Prophet ﷺ saw the children he said, "Take the children and carry them, and please pass me Ibn Ja'far." They passed 'Abdullah bin Ja'far on to him and he held him in his arms.

One day as the Prophet ﷺ was performing ablution, there came to him Mahmud bin al-Rabi' who was only five years old. The Prophet ﷺ took some water in his mouth and jokingly blew it out in his face. (al-Bukhari)

Generally, the Prophet ﷺ was lively and merry with everyone. He would always try to make people happy. He would always be easygoing with everyone so that people would not become bored in his company.

A man came to the Prophet ﷺ wanting a camel to ride on for a journey or expedition. The Prophet ﷺ said to him jokingly, "I will give you an offspring of a camel." The man became surprised and thought of how he could possibly ride a camel's offspring that could not carry his weight. He said, "O Messenger of Allah! What would I do with a camel's offspring?" The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Does a camel give birth to anything but an offspring?' Meaning; I will give you a grown camel, however, no doubt, it is still another camel's offspring!

Once, he jokingly said to Anas, "O you, the possessor of two ears!"

A woman once came to the Prophet ﷺ complaining about her husband, so he said to her, "Is your husband the one whose eyes are white?" The woman became worried and thought that her husband had become blind, in light of what Allah said about

Jacob, "His eyes whitened from grieving so much..." meaning, he became blind. She went back to her husband terrified and began to look into his eyes carefully. He asked her what the problem was. She said, "The Prophet ﷺ said that there is whiteness in your eyes!" The man said, "O woman! Did he not tell you that the whiteness in my eyes is more than the blackness?" meaning; everyone has whiteness and blackness in his eyes.

The Prophet ﷺ would react positively to whoever joked or bantered with him and he would smile. Once 'Umar bin al-Khattab came to the Prophet ﷺ who was at that time angry with his wives, due to their demanding of more allowance. 'Umar – may Allah be pleased with him – said, "O Messenger of Allah! If you recall us when we were men of the Quraysh, we always controlled our women. If any of our women were to ask for more allowance, we would have jumped up and grabbed her neck! But when we came to Madinah we found the women controlling their men, so our women began to learn these tricks from their women!" Thereupon the Prophet ﷺ smiled. 'Umar continued to speak and the Prophet ﷺ continued to smile.

We read in various Ahadith that often the Prophet ﷺ would smile till his molar teeth would show. He was indeed an extremely kind and friendly companion. If we were to train ourselves to embrace such skills, we would surely taste the sweetness of life.

A thought...

A child is like soft clay that we shape according to our treatment of it.

(12)

With slaves and servants

The Prophet ﷺ was an expert on how to win hearts using appropriate techniques.

When the Prophet's uncle passed away, the Quraysh began to harm him severely. He ﷺ therefore left for Ta'if in order to seek the support and assistance of the tribe of Thaqif, as well as to seek their protection against the Quraysh. He was hoping that they would accept the message that he brought to them from Allah. He thus went out to them on his own. He entered Ta'if and proceeded to meet three men who were the leaders and the noblest men of Thaqif. They were three brothers; 'Abd Yalayl bin 'Amr, and his brothers Mas'ud and Habib, all sons of 'Amr bin 'Umayr.

The Prophet ﷺ sat with them and called them to Allah. He asked them to help him and support the cause of Islam, and to stand by him against those who oppose him from his own people. However, their response was a disgraceful one.

One of them said, "I would tear off the covering of the Ka'bah if Allah really has sent you!"

Another said, "Did Allah not find anyone else to send?"

The third person sardonically responded, "By Allah, I would

never respond to you! If you really are the Messenger of Allah as you claim, then you are too dangerous to be responded to, and if you are lying about Allah, then I should never speak to you!"

The Prophet ﷺ then stood up to leave after feeling disillusioned by the nobility of Thaqif. He also feared that the Quraysh would find out that Thaqif had rejected him, and subsequently increase their torture.

Thus he said to them, "Whatever you do, please keep this meeting a secret."

But they did not. Instead, they incited the foolish people and the slaves against him, until they began to follow him to curse and abuse him. The people chased the Prophet ﷺ into the fields of 'Utbah bin Rabi'ah and Shaybah bin Rabi'ah whilst the two were present. The mob then dispersed and the Prophet ﷺ sat under the shade of grape vines. The two sons of Rabi'ah witnessed his ordeal at the hands of the mob and felt pity for him, so they called a Christian servant they had by the name of 'Addas and said to him, "Take a bunch of these grapes, place it in this plate and then deliver it to that man and ask him to eat them." 'Addas did as he was told. He came to the Prophet ﷺ, placed the plate in front of him and said, "Please eat." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ stretched his hand forth to eat and said, "In the name of Allah..."

'Addas said, "By Allah, no one says this phrase in these cities."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "From which city are you, O 'Addas, and what is your religion?"

He replied, "I am a Christian. I come from Nineveh."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "You belong to the city of the righteous Jonah, son of Matta."

He said, "What do you know about Jonah the son of Matta?"

The Prophet ﷺ replied, "He is my brother. He was a Prophet and so am I."

Thereupon 'Addas paid homage to Allah's Messenger ﷺ by kissing his head, hands and feet, as the two sons of Rabi'a watched. One of them said to the other, "He has corrupted this servant of yours."

When 'Addas returned to his master, he was noticeably affected by the Prophet ﷺ and his words. His master said to him, "Woe be to you, O 'Addas! Why did you kiss this man's head, hands and feet?!"

He replied, "Dear master! There is none on this earth better than him. He informed me about things that only a Prophet could know."

The master replied, "Woe be to you O 'Addas! Do not let him change your religion, for your religion is better than his."

Could we today treat everyone with such excellent manners, irrespective of their social status?

A glimpse...

Treat people humanely, irrespective of their appearance, wealth and status.

(13)

With adversaries

The Prophet ﷺ would always be just with the disbelievers and even be ready to sacrifice his life in order to call them to Islam and rectify their affairs. He would bear their evils with patience and try to overlook their harms. Why would he not do so when Allah has said: "We have sent you as a mercy..." To whom? To the believers only? No; rather, "To the world."

Think about the Jews who would insult him and instigate trouble, whilst he would continue to be gentle with them. 'A'ishah – may Allah be pleased with her – said, "The Jews once passed by the Prophet's house and said: 'as-Saam 'alaykum' (i.e. death be upon you), and the Prophet ﷺ replied: 'And upon you, too!" 'A'ishah couldn't bear it, so when she heard it, she responded, 'And death be upon you, too, and Allah's curse and anger!"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Take it easy, O 'A'ishah! You should be gentle. You shouldn't curse or be harsh."

She said, "Didn't you hear what they said?"

He said, "Didn't you hear what I said? I prayed against them and that prayer will be accepted, whereas their prayer against me will not be accepted."

Yes, for there is no need to respond to insult with another

insult. Allah has said, "Speak to people with kind words..."

One day the Prophet ﷺ went out with his companions on an expedition. On their way back they stopped over in a valley full of trees. The companions dispersed under the various trees and fell asleep. The Prophet ﷺ hung his sword on a branch, spread out his cloak, and went to sleep. Meanwhile, a pagan who was following the Muslims noticed that Allah's Messenger didn't have his sword, so he approached him stealthily, took the sword off the branch and then shouted, "O Muhammad! Who is going to protect you from me now?"

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ woke up to find the man standing over him with a sword, ready to kill him. The Prophet ﷺ was alone and wearing only a lower garment. His companions had dispersed and were asleep. The man became conceited with his power and strength and kept repeating, "Who will save you from me?! Who will save you from me?!"

The Prophet ﷺ replied with full conviction, "Allah."

The man was struck with terror and the sword fell from his hand. The Prophet ﷺ then got hold of the sword and said, "Who will save you from me now?"

The man's complexion changed. He became frightened and began to beg for mercy. He said, "No one will protect me now! Please treat me well!"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Do you accept Islam?"

He said, "No, I will not, but I shall not ally with anyone you are fighting against!"

The Prophet ﷺ forgave him and treated him well. The man

was a leader among his people, so he went back and called them to Islam, and they all accepted. Yes, be good to others, thereby capturing their hearts. In fact, even with his sworn enemies, he ﷺ would be of immaculate character, due to which he would win them over, guide their hearts and cleanse them of disbelief.

When the Prophet ﷺ began to call the people to Islam publicly, Quraysh began to resist him even more severely. One of the things the Quraysh did was to discuss among themselves what to do about the Prophet's call and the speed at which people were accepting his faith. They said, "Look for the most expert among you in magic, soothsaying and poetry, and let him approach the man who split our ranks, disunited us and insulted our religion. Let him converse with him and see what he says."

They said, "We cannot think of anyone except 'Utbah bin Rabi'ah."

They said to 'Utbah, "You are the one, O Abu'l-Walid!" 'Utbah was a very forbearing person. He said, "O Quraysh, do you want me to go and speak to him, and perhaps make him some offers he might accept?"

They said, "Yes, O Abul-Walid."

'Utbah got up and went to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He found him sitting tranquilly. 'Utbah came up to him and said, "O Muhammad! Who is better, you or 'Abdullah?"

The Prophet ﷺ remained silent in honour of his father.

He said, "Who is better, you or 'Abd al-Muttalib?"

He ﷺ remained silent in respect for his grandfather.

'Utbah said, "If you think that they were better than you,

then how did they worship the gods you have insulted? And if you think that you are better than them, then speak so we may hear you say it."

Before the Prophet ﷺ could respond, 'Utbah lashed out in rage, "By Allah, we have seen no other man who has brought such great a calamity to a nation as you have done. You have disunited us, split our ranks, insulted our religion, and brought disgrace to us as everyone is now saying that Quraysh have a magician! There is nothing left to wait for except the moment when we brandish our swords and begin to kill each other."

'Utbah was displaying his anger as the Prophet ﷺ listened silently, sitting well composed. 'Utbah then decided to bargain with the Prophet ﷺ, so he said, "If you are doing all this with a view to gaining wealth, then we will join together to give you greater riches than any person from Quraysh has possessed. If ambition moves you, we will make you our chief. If you desire kingship we will readily offer you that. If you are under the power of an evil spirit which seems to haunt and dominate you so that you cannot shake off its yoke, then we shall call in skilful physicians to cure you."

'Utbah continued to speak in this unworthy manner with the Prophet ﷺ, trying to bargain with him, whilst the Prophet ﷺ remained silent and calm. After 'Utbah had made the offer of leadership, wealth, women and even treatment for insanity, he fell silent, waiting for a response.

The Prophet ﷺ raised his gaze to him and said, "Have you finished, O Abu al-Walid?"

'Utbah was not surprised at the manners of the Prophet ﷺ,

and simply replied, "Yes."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Now listen to me."

"Alright", said 'Utbah.

The Prophet ﷺ then recited the verses, "In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful. Ha-Meem. A revelation from Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful. A Book whereof the verses are explained in detail; — a Qur'an in Arabic for people who know. Giving glad tidings and warning, but most of them turn away, so they listen not."

The Prophet ﷺ continued to recite the verse as 'Utbah listened. Suddenly, 'Utbah sat on the ground and his body shook. He placed his hands behind him and rested on them as he listened to the verses. The Prophet ﷺ continued to recite until he approached the verse, "If they turn away, then say to them: I warn you of a thunderbolt similar to that which struck 'Aad and Thamud."

'Utbah was utterly terrified when he heard this warning and threat of punishment. He jumped up and placed his hand on the mouth of the Prophet ﷺ to prevent him from reciting further. But the Prophet ﷺ continued to recite until the verse of prostration, after which he prostrated. When he raised his head up from prostration, he gazed at 'Utbah and said, "Did you hear that, O 'Utbah?"

"Yes", replied 'Utbah.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Now, it is up to you."

'Utbah left to go back to his companions as they impatiently waited for him. When he approached them they said to each

other, "I swear by Allah, he has returned with a different complexion!"

When he sat with them they asked, "What happened, O Abu al-Walid?"

He said, "What happened is that I heard words the like of which I have never heard before. By Allah, they weren't the words of poetry, magic or soothsaying. O people of Quraysh! I request you to heed my advice and grant the man full freedom to pursue his goals, in which case you could safely detach yourselves from him. I swear that his words will one day triumph. O people! I heard him say: 'In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful. Ha-Meem. A revelation from Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful – to his words – I warn you of a thunderbolt similar to that which struck 'Aad and Thamud.'

As he said that, I placed my hand on his mouth, and begged him, in the name of our ties of kinship, to stop! You know very well that when Muhammad says something he doesn't lie. I feared that punishment may descend upon you."

Abu al-Walid then remained silent as he reflected, while his companions stared at him.

He then said, "By Allah, there is sweetness in what he says. There is beauty in what he says, as if its top is fruit and its bottom is water. It is overwhelming and cannot be subdued. It obliterates everything beneath it. No man can say this. No man can say this."

They said, "This is just poetry, O Abu al-Walid! Just poetry!"

He said, "By Allah, no one is more knowledgeable than me

concerning poetry! There is no one more knowledgeable about Rajaz (poetical rhyme) and poems than me! Or even the poetry of the Jinn! By Allah, what he says is not similar to any poetry!"

'Utbah continued to discuss the Prophet ﷺ with them. Although, 'Utbah did not accept Islam, there is no doubt that his soul did incline towards it. Contemplate how the Prophet's noble manners and his technique of listening to 'Utbah attentively affected him, even though he was a sworn enemy of Islam.

On another occasion, the Quraysh decided to send Husayn bin al-Mundhir al-Khuza'i – the father of the Prophet's companion, 'Imran bin Husayn – to discuss with the Prophet ﷺ and to persuade him to stop his mission.

'Imran's father visited the Prophet ﷺ as he was sitting with his companions and said the usual words of complaint which the Quraysh would say to him, "You have disunited us, split our ranks...", as the Prophet ﷺ calmly listened until he finished.

The Prophet ﷺ then said to him politely, "Have you finished, O Abu 'Imran?"

"Yes", he replied.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Then answer my questions."

"Ok, I am listening", he said.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "O Abu 'Imran, how many gods do you worship?"

He replied, "Seven. Six on the earth and one in the heavens!"

The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Which of them do you love and fear?'

He said, "The one in the heavens."

The Prophet ﷺ said in all politeness, "O Husayn, if you were to accept Islam, I would teach you two words you could greatly benefit from."

Husayn accepted Islam on the spot and said, "O Messenger of Allah, teach me the two words you promised you would teach me."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "O Allah, inspire me with guidance and protect me from my own evil."

How wonderful was the way in which the Prophet ﷺ dealt with people! And how beautifully his character had a positive impact on them! This kind of attitude goes a long way in bringing non-Muslims closer to Islam.

A young man once travelled to Germany for studies and took up residence in a flat. There was a young German man living in the flat opposite him. They didn't have any connection with each other except that they were neighbours. Once, the German neighbour travelled unexpectedly. A paperboy would deliver a newspaper everyday and leave it at his doorstep. The young man noticed the newspapers piling up and asked one of the other neighbours to find out if the neighbour had travelled. He picked all the newspapers up and placed them in a secure place. He would collect a new newspaper everyday and add it to the collection.

When his neighbour returned after a couple of months, he greeted him and gave him all the newspapers. He said, "I thought that perhaps you were following a news story or participating in a competition and I didn't want you to miss out on it."

The neighbour was surprised at this and said, "Would you like to be paid for your services?"

He said, "No. Our religion orders us to be good to our neighbours and since you are my neighbour, I must benevolent you." The person continued to be gracious to his neighbour until he finally embraced Islam.

This, by Allah, is the real joy of life, to feel that you worship Allah by every little thing you do, even the manners with which you deal with others. How often is it that people are turned away from Islam due to the bad treatment they receive at the hand of some Muslims; one oppresses his employee, another deceives his customer and another annoys his neighbour? Let us make a fresh start with them.

Enlightenment...

The best preacher is the one who preaches with his actions before his words.

(14)

With animals

When good interpersonal skills become one's habit, they become his second nature and an integral part of his personality. Such a person is always found to be easygoing, light-hearted, gentle, forbearing and sensitive with all, including animals and non-living things.

Once, when the Prophet ﷺ was on a journey with his companions, he stopped over to answer the call of nature. Meanwhile, some of his companions noticed a redstart bird with two chicks. He took the chicks away. The bird came and began to circle around them flapping its wings. When the Prophet ﷺ came and saw the scene, he turned to his companions and said, "Who distressed the bird by taking its chicks from it? Return the chicks to the bird!"

On a different occasion, the Prophet ﷺ noticed a burnt ants' nest. "Who burnt the nest?" he demanded.

One of his companions replied, "I did."

The Prophet ﷺ became angry and said, "No one but Allah punishes with fire!"

The Prophet ﷺ was so merciful that if he saw a cat whilst he was performing ablution, he would lower the utensil down

for the cat to drink from and then perform ablution from the leftover water.

Once he passed by a man who had laid a sheep on the ground and placed his foot on its neck to slaughter it while sharpening the knife as the sheep looked on. The Prophet ﷺ became angry upon seeing this and said, "Do you want it to die twice? Why didn't you sharpen your knife before you laid it on the ground?"

On another occasion, he ﷺ passed by two men in the middle of a conversation and each of them was sitting on his camel. When he saw this, he felt pity for the camels and therefore forbade people from using animals as chairs, meaning that one is not to mount it except when required and that when the need is fulfilled, one should dismount and allow it to rest. The Prophet ﷺ also forbade branding an animal on its face.

A story is related of the Prophet ﷺ and his camel called al-'Adhba: Once a group of pagans attacked some camels belonging to the Muslims on the outskirts of Madinah. They took away all the camels including al-'Adhba, as well as a Muslim woman. Whenever they stopped over on their way, they let the camels loose so they could pasture. When they stopped over at a certain place and fell asleep, the woman got up in order to escape. She went to the camels so as to mount one of them. Each time she went near a camel, it made a noise, causing her to avoid approaching it lest the pagans woke up. She kept approaching the camels one by one until she came to al-'Adhba and moved it to discover that it was docile and well-trained. She then mounted the camel and made her way back to Madinah.

When she felt safe, she was overcome with joy and said, "O

Allah, I vow to you that if you save me by means of this camel, I would sacrifice it for you!"

When the woman reached Madinah, the people recognised the Prophet's camel. The woman then went home and the people brought the camel to the Prophet ﷺ. Later, the woman came and asked for the camel so that she could slaughter it. The Prophet ﷺ said, "How evil is the reward you give it! Allah saved you on it and now you want to slaughter it!"

The Prophet ﷺ then said, "A vow is not valid if it is in disobedience to Allah, or with that which one does not own."

Why not turn your interpersonal skills, such as gentleness and generosity, into your natural disposition that would constantly remain with you and in everything you do, even when you deal with animals, trees and non-living things?

The Prophet ﷺ would give Friday sermons resting his back on an erect trunk of a date-palm tree in his mosque. A woman from the Ansaar said, "O Messenger of Allah, shall I not make something for you to sit on? I have a servant who is a carpenter."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "If you wish."

The woman made a pulpit for him. The next Friday, the Prophet ﷺ climbed the pulpit she had made, and as he sat on it, the tree-trunk behind him mooed like a bull screamed as if it was about to split in half. The mosque shook. The Prophet ﷺ descended from the pulpit and embraced the trunk and it wailed like a child.

Thereupon the Prophet ﷺ said, "I swear by the One who has

Muhammad's soul in His Hand, were it not that I embraced it, it would have continued crying until the Day of Resurrection."

A hint...

Allah has honoured man, but this does not give him an excuse to oppress the rest of His creatures.

(15)

A hundred ways to win people's hearts

Anyone involved in a particular activity wishes to excel in order to achieve his objectives. The one who loves wealth specialises in accumulating it and further aspires to learn the tricks of his trade. Satellite television channels specialise in attracting viewers by airing a variety of shows using the latest technology. They also train their presenters in attracting viewers for current as well as forthcoming programs. The same can be said of newspapers, radio and television. The same applies to those who market various products, whether halaal or haraam. All these people endeavour to specialise in techniques that are needed in order for them to excel in their respective fields.

Winning hearts is also an art with its own ways and means.

Suppose you enter a gathering of forty men, and as you pass by each of them, shaking everyone's hand, the first shakes your hand indifferently and says very coldly, "Welcome"; the second is busy speaking to the next person, and as you greet him by surprise, he responds to you very impersonally and without even looking at you, then continues with his conversation with the next person; the third person is speaking on the phone, so he simply stretches out his hand without saying a word or showing any respect. However, when you get to the fourth person, he

sees you and immediately stands up to greet you. When your eyes meet his, he smiles and demonstrates that he is glad to meet you. He shakes your hand warmly and welcomes you, even though you don't know each other at all! You then greet the rest of the people and take a seat. Do you doubt that your heart will have the most respect for the fourth person? No doubt it will, even though you do not know his name, nor his status or profession. Despite that, he successfully captures your heart, not with wealth, status, or lineage, but merely by his interpersonal skills.

Hence, hearts are not won by force, wealth, beauty or status. They are won by much less of a sacrifice, yet few are able to win them.

I recall one of my students at university who had become physiologically ill due to severe depression. His father held a high position in the police force and had come to visit me at the university quite a few times, asking me for my help with his son. I would visit his house every now and then, which was a towering mansion. I would notice that his house would always be full of guests. I was amazed at how much this family was loved and respected.

Years went by and the man retired. I went to his house for a visit. I entered his mansion and went into the guest room to notice more than fifty chairs, but only one person watching television and a servant offering him coffee or tea. I sat with him for a while. When I left, I began to compare his situation while the man was working with now that he had retired. What was it about him that had attracted the people then? I realised that the man did not win people over by his manners, kindness and

good treatment of others. Rather, he had only attracted them by means of his status, position and the fact that he was well-connected. When he lost his position, he also lost the love people had for him.

Therefore, learn a lesson from this man. Deal with the people so skilfully that they love you for who you are and what you say, and for your smile, gentleness and generosity. They will love the fact that you overlook their faults and stand by them at times of hardship. Do not allow their hearts to be attached merely to your status and your purse!

The one who provides his children and wife with wealth, food and drink only does not win their hearts by doing so, but only their stomachs! The one who showers his family with wealth while he mistreats them does not win their hearts; rather, he only wins their pockets.

For this reason, do not be surprised if you see a young man who faces a problem and therefore complains to his friend, teacher, or the Imam of a mosque, but not to his own father. This would be because the father has failed to win over his heart and break down barriers. On the other hand, it is the teacher or the friend, who has managed to win his heart.

Another important point: Have you ever noticed that when certain people visit a gathering packed with people and look left and right for somewhere to sit, there always seems to be no shortage of people calling them over to sit next to them. Why?

Or at a buffet, where everyone serves themselves food and then looks for somewhere to sit, have you noted that such people, as soon as they have filled their plates, are subject to large

numbers of people calling them over in order to eat with them? Whereas, others may fill their plates and have nobody taking any interest whatsoever, so they have a very lonely meal?

Why are people so eager to sit with one type but not the other? Is it not the case that certain people have the ability to attract hearts wherever they may be, as if they are magnets? How extraordinary!

How did they manage to win over people? By using clever techniques to capture people's hearts.

Resolution...

Our ability to capture people's hearts and win their love brings us great happiness in life.

(16)

Purify your intention for the sake of Allah

I contemplated the way some people, some of whom I have lived with for years, deal with others,. I do not ever recall them laughing, or even smiling at a joke out of courtesy, or reacting positively to the person speaking to them. I used to think that perhaps this was how they were nurtured and that they were unable to alter their nature. I was therefore stunned one day to see some of them with a group of rich and powerful people, laughing and being courteous. I then realised that they only did this for their own personal interests and are thereby losing out on great rewards from Allah.

A believer worships Allah by being well-mannered and dealing pleasantly with all, not to attain status or wealth, or for people's praise, or to get married, etc., but only so that Allah may love him and make him beloved to His creation. Yes! Whoever considers exercising good manners as worship will deal courteously with everyone, be he rich or poor, a manager or a tea-boy. If one day a poor cleaner on the street stretches out his hand for you to shake it, and then another day a director of some company stretches his hand out in the same way, will you treat them equally? Will you welcome them both, and smile at them equally?

The Prophet ﷺ would certainly treat them both equally in terms of welcoming them and showing them sincere conduct and compassion. Who knows, perhaps the one you may belittle and look down upon might actually be better in Allah's sight than he who you look up to and show honour and respect to.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "The most beloved of you to me, and the closest of you to me on the Day of Resurrection are the best of you in manners." (al-Tirmidhi, Sahih)

The Prophet ﷺ also said to al-Ashaj bin 'Abd Qays, "You have two qualities that Allah and His Messenger love." What are these two qualities? Praying at night? Fasting all day?

Al-Ashaj became overjoyed and said, "What are the two qualities, O Messenger of Allah?"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Forbearance and patience." (Ahmad and Muslim)

The Prophet ﷺ was asked about piety, and he replied, "Piety is to show good manners." (Muslim)

He ﷺ was asked about the deed on account of which most people will enter paradise, he ﷺ said, "Fear of Allah and good manners." (al-Tirmidhi, Sahih)

The Prophet ﷺ said, "The most complete in faith are those best in their character, those who are easy to socialise with, and those who get along with others and others get along with them. There is no good in the one who cannot get along with others and others cannot get along with him." (al-Tirmidhi, Sahih)

The Prophet ﷺ said, "There is nothing heavier in the scales than good manners." (Abu Dawud, Sahih)

The Prophet ﷺ said, "A person by his good character reaches the rank of the one praying at night and fasting all day." (al-Tirmidhi, Sahih)

The one who improves his character becomes successful in both worlds. Consider the incident of Umm Salamah – may Allah be pleased with her – when she sat with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and thought about the Hereafter and what Allah had promised her.

She said, "O Messenger of Allah! A woman might be married twice in this world. When she and her husbands die and they all enter paradise, who is she going to be with?"

What did he ﷺ say in response? That she will be with the one who prayed the longest? Or the one who fasted the most? Or the most knowledgeable of them? No! Rather, he (ﷺ) said, "She will be with the best of them in character."

Umm Salamah was surprised. When the Prophet ﷺ noticed this, he said, "O Umm Salamah! Good character makes one successful in this life and the next."

Yes! The best of both worlds. He achieves the best of this world by earning people's love, and the best of the next by gaining immense reward. No matter how much good a person does, his good deeds would always be marred by bad character.

Once it was mentioned to the Prophet ﷺ that a certain woman prayed, fasted, gave in charity and did many other righteous deeds, but at the same time harmed her neighbours by her words (i.e., she was bad mannered). He ﷺ replied, "She will be in Hell."

The Prophet ﷺ was the best example to follow in every aspect of character. He was the most generous, the bravest, the most forbearing, and more bashful than a virgin. He was the most truthful and trustworthy person, as the disbelievers will bear witness to even before the believers, as will the sinners before the righteous. So much so that Khadijah – may Allah be pleased with her – said to the Prophet ﷺ when he first received revelation, "Allah shall never subject you to any indignity, for you always maintain your ties with those of your kin, and you are always generous in giving; you are diligent, and you pursue what others regard as a lost cause; you calm the heart of your guest, and you lend your support to those who seek justice and redress."

As a matter of fact, Allah's words in his praise are something we will continue to recite until the Last Day, "And indeed, you (O Muhammad ﷺ) are on an exalted standard of character!" The Prophet's character in its entirety was the Qur'an. When he recited, "Be good, for Allah loves those who are good" he was good to the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the noble and the weak. When he heard Allah's words, "Forgive and overlook..." he forgave and overlooked. When he recited, "Speak well to the people..." he spoke well to all.

If the Prophet ﷺ really is our example, then let us study his life carefully, and in particular how he would deal with others, rectify their faults, bear their harms with patience, tire himself at their service, and call them to guidance. One day he was seen helping a poor person, the next making peace between two Muslims, the next calling the disbelievers to Islam, and so on, until he grew old and his bones became weak. 'A'ishah – may Allah be pleased with her – said while describing the Prophet ﷺ, "Most

of his prayers, when he grew old, he offered sitting." Can we guess why? She explained, "Because the people had completely exhausted him."

The Prophet ﷺ was so eager to improve his character that he would pray to Allah, "O Allah, just as you have beautified my physical being, beautify my character." (Ahmad, Sahih)

He ﷺ also would say, "O Allah, guide me to the best of manners, for none guides to them except You. Protect me from bad manners, for none can protect me except You." (Muslim)

Hence, we are in need of emulating the Prophet ﷺ in his character when we deal with Muslims so that we may win them over, and when we deal with the non-Muslims so that we can educate them about Islam.

A hint...

Purify your intention so that your interpersonal skills can turn into acts of worship, with which you can draw closer to Allah.

(17)

Use the right flavour

There are things which people unanimously love and appreciate, and things which they unanimously dislike. There are also things upon which they differ, so while some may be appreciative of them, others may find them cumbersome. Hence, everyone loves to be smiled at and hates to be frowned at, yet some may appreciate jokes whilst others may not. Some people may like others visiting them whilst others would rather be left alone. Some may love to talk excessively whilst others may not. Often people feel comfortable with those of the same nature as themselves. Why not then be pleasing to people of all natures?

It is said that a man once saw a falcon flying next to a crow. He was amazed at the thought of the king of all birds flying next to a crow! He concluded that they must have something in common for them to fly together, he continued to watch them until they became tired and decided to land, and lo and behold, they were both crippled!

Hence, if someone knows that his father prefers silence to excessive talk, then let him deal with his father accordingly in order to gain his love. If a wife knows that her husband loves jokes, then let her joke with him. If she discovers the opposite then she should avoid joking with him. The same can be said about

a man dealing with his colleagues, neighbours and brothers. Do not think for a moment that people are all of the same nature, for they differ and come in many varieties.

I recall that a righteous old lady, who happens to be the mother of a friend of mine, would praise one of her sons lavishly. She would always be happy whenever he visited or conversed with her. Even though the rest of her sons and daughters were also kind to her, her heart was attached to this one son in particular. I would wonder about this, so one day I asked my friend why. He replied, "The problem is that my brothers do not comprehend my mother's nature. They become too cumbersome for her to bear whenever they sit with her."

I asked, jokingly, "So your highness was the only one able to discover her nature?"

He laughed and said, "Yes! Allow me to tell you the secret. My mother is like any other aged woman who loves to talk about womanly issues, such as who got married or divorced, how many sons so-and-so has, which of them is the eldest, what is the name of her first child, and so on. I consider all this frivolous, but she loves chatting about it. She feels that the information she shares with me is priceless as it cannot be found in any book, audio or website. She feels that she is relating unique information to me, and is delighted to do so! Whenever I sit with her I instigate such conversations and she becomes elated and continues to speak ceaselessly. My brothers talk about issues that do not interest her and so she feels bored in their company and longs to be in mine! That is all there is to it."

Yes, if you realise the nature of the one you are conversing

with, what he likes and dislikes, you will be able to capture his heart. Whoever looks at the way the Prophet ﷺ dealt with people would realise that he would deal with everyone in accordance with their personality. Even when he would deal with his wives, he would do so on the basis of the personality of each.

'A'ishah was very much of an extrovert and so the Prophet ﷺ would often joke with her. Once she went with him on a journey and on the way back, as they approached Madinah, the Prophet ﷺ said to the people, "Continue on and leave us behind for a while." The people carried on, leaving them behind, and so the Prophet ﷺ was left with 'A'ishah. At the time, 'A'ishah was a young and energetic girl. The Prophet ﷺ turned to her and said, "Come, let's race!" She therefore raced him, and 'A'ishah won.

After some time, she went out again with the Prophet ﷺ on another journey. By now she had grown and put on weight. The Prophet ﷺ said to the people, "Carry on..." and they did. He then said to 'A'ishah, "Come, let's race!" They raced, and this time, the Prophet ﷺ won. The Prophet ﷺ then started to joke about it as he patted her on her back, saying, "That was for last time when you defeated me! That was for last time when you defeated me!" He would, however, deal very differently with Khadijah, as she was fifteen years his senior.

He would take this into consideration even when dealing with his companions. He would not deal with Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه as he would with Khalid رضي الله عنه, or with Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه as he would with Talhah رضي الله عنه. He would deal with 'Umar in a way he would never do with anyone else.

When the Prophet ﷺ went out with his Companions to the

battle of Badr and came to know that the Quraysh were also on their way, he knew that some men from the Quraysh were coerced into going and had no intention of fighting the Muslims. He stood amongst his companions and said, "I have come to know that some men from Banu Hashim and others have been forced to come. They do not want to fight us. Therefore, whoever of you meets anyone from Banu Hashim in the battle, let him not kill him. Whoever sees Abu al-Bakhtari bin Hashim bin al-Harith bin Asad, let him not kill him. Whoever sees al-'Abbas bin 'Abd al-Muttalib, the uncle of the Messenger of Allah, let him not kill him, for he has been compelled."

It is also said that al-'Abbas was a Muslim who had concealed his faith and would inform the Prophet ﷺ about Quraysh's activities. The Prophet ﷺ did not want him to be killed by the Muslims, nor did he want to expose the fact that al-'Abbas was a Muslim. This was the first battle ever to be fought between the two factions, the Muslims and the disbelievers of Quraysh. The Muslims were tense since they had not prepared for the fight and would soon be fighting their relatives, sons and fathers. Yet, the Prophet ﷺ was forbidding them from killing certain people.

'Utbah bin Rabi'ah was from the leaders of the Quraysh who were going to lead the battle against the Muslims, while his son, Abu Hudhayfah bin 'Utbah bin Rabi'ah was with the Muslims. Abu Hudhayfah lost patience and said, "Shall we kill our fathers, our sons and our brothers and spare al-'Abbas?! By Allah, if I see him in the battlefield, I shall strike him with my sword!"

When his words reached the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, he ﷺ looked around and saw three hundred strong men. Yet, he turned

to ‘Umar exclusively and said, “O Abu Hafs! Is the face of the uncle of Allah’s Messenger to be struck with a sword?”

‘Umar said, “By Allah, this was the first time ever the Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave me my nickname, Abu Hafs.”

‘Umar understood the message. He knew that they were about to fight a battle and were in no position to allow anyone to disobey the orders of the leader or argue in front of the other fighters. Thus, ‘Umar chose a stern solution. He said, “O Messenger of Allah! Allow me to strike his neck off with a sword!” But the Prophet ﷺ stopped him and saw that the threat alone was enough to quell the situation.

Abu Hudhayfa – may Allah be pleased with him – was a righteous man who would afterwards say, “I do not feel at ease due to the words I uttered that day and will continue to be terrified unless martyrdom expiates for them.” He was martyred on the day of Yamamah.

The Prophet ﷺ knew what kind of tasks he could expect ‘Umar to perform. He wasn’t asked to collect charity, or make peace, or educate the unlearned. They were in the midst of a conflict and the need had arisen for a determined and resolute person, and hence, the Prophet ﷺ chose ‘Umar, for this task, urging him on further by saying, “Is the face of the uncle of Allah’s Messenger to be struck with a sword?”

On another occasion, the Prophet ﷺ fought the Jews of Khaybar briefly and then made a peace agreement with them where he stipulated that they were not to hide any of their wealth, or conceal any gold and silver, and that they must present everything to him so he may decide what to do with it. He also

warned them that if they were to hide anything, then they would have no agreement or pact.

Huyay bin Akhtab was one of their leaders who had returned from Madinah with a leather bag full of gold and jewellery and then passed away, leaving behind all his wealth, which the Jews concealed from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ said to the uncle of Huyay bin Akhtab, "What happened to what Huyay brought from Banu Nadheer (i.e., the leather bag)?"

He said, "It was all spent on expenses and wars."

The Prophet ﷺ thought about what he said, and it occurred to him that Huyay had only died recently and that the wealth he had brought over was of a huge amount. Moreover, there had not occurred any war recently that it could have been spent on.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "The wealth was only brought here recently, and it was too much to have been spent so quickly."

The Jewish man said, "The wealth and jewellery have all been spent."

The Prophet ﷺ realised that the man was lying, so he looked at his companions, who were many in number, and each of them understood his message. The Prophet ﷺ then turned to az-Zubayr bin al-'Awwam and said, "O Zubayr, give him a taste of punishment." As az-Zubayr began his approach the man was terrified. Knowing that his situation was grave, he said, "Well, I did see Huyay once going into this deserted place!" and pointed to an old abandoned house. The Muslims went into the house and found the wealth hidden therein. This is how the Prophet ﷺ was with az-Zubayr.

The Companions of the Prophet ﷺ would deal with each other in a similar fashion. When the Prophet ﷺ was on his death bed and severely ill, unable to lead the people in prayer, he said, "Order Abu Bakr to lead the people in prayer." Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه was a very soft-hearted person. He was the Prophet's companion in this life and will be in the next. He was the Prophet's friend in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance as well as in Islam. He was also the father of his wife, 'A'ishah –may Allah be pleased with her. Hence, he was utterly distressed over the Prophet's illness.

When the Prophet ﷺ asked the people to order Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه to lead the prayer, some of those present said, "Abu Bakr is a very soft-hearted person. If he took up this position, he would not be able to lead the people in prayer due to his excessive weeping." The Prophet ﷺ knew this about Abu Bakr, that he was a very soft-hearted person who easily broke down in tears, especially when requested something of this nature.

However, the Prophet ﷺ was alluding to the fact that Abu Bakr was the most deserving of being a Caliph after him. It is as if he he was saying, "I am not present, so let Abu Bakr take up the responsibility." Hence, the Prophet ﷺ requested once again, "Order Abu Bakr to lead the people in prayer" until Abu Bakr finally led the prayer.

Even though Abu Bakr was a very soft-hearted person, he was at the same time held in very high regard, and would also become angry at occasions. His companion, 'Umar رضي الله عنه, knew this fact. After the Prophet's death, the companions – the Muhajiroon and the Ansaar – gathered together in the quarters of Banu Sa'idah to decide on a Caliph. 'Umar accompanied Abu Bakr on

his way to the quarter.

'Umar said, "We arrived at the quarters of Banu Sa'idah. When we sat down, a man from the Ansaar affirmed the testimony of faith, praised Allah as He should be, and then said: 'To proceed: we are the helpers of Allah and the vanguards of Islam, and you, O Muhajiroon, are a part of us. Some of you have shown hastiness and want to take possession of leadership from us.'

"When he finished, I wanted to speak. I had thought of some words that I would say, and I liked what I had prepared, and I wanted to say it in front of Abu Bakr, but I knew that he could be stern at times. However, Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه said: 'Relax, O 'Umar!'

"I did not want to upset him and hence, he spoke and was definitely more knowledgeable and sedate than me. By Allah, he said everything I had thought of saying, and even better!

Abu Bakr said: 'As for what you mentioned of the good that exists in you, then that is true. However, the Arabs have only known the Quraysh as leaders. They are the most judicious of Arabs in terms of lineage and tribe. I have chosen one of their two men here, so give allegiance to the one you like.

"He took my hand and that of Abu Ubaydah, who was sitting with us. I didn't detest anything he had said except this. By Allah, I would rather that my neck was struck off without me committing any sin than for me to be a leader of a people that included Abu Bakr.

"The people fell silent, and then a person from the Ansaar said: 'I am of those by means of whose counsel people seek relief, and I have a family that will aid and defend me. How about if we have a leader from amongst ourselves, and you have a leader

amongst yourselves, O Quraysh?'

"There was much clamour and voices were raised, which we feared may result in discord. So I said: 'Stretch out your hand, O Abu Bakr!'

"He stretched forth his hand and I pledged allegiance to him. Then the Muhajiroon gave him the pledge, followed by the Ansaar."

Yes, everyone has a special key to open his heart, earn his love and influence him. We notice this often in our lives. Perhaps you have heard work colleagues say that if you want to get the manager to agree to something, then so-and-so is the key, or if you want anything, ask so-and-so to speak to him on your behalf. Why not then use your skills to open up people's hearts and be a head instead of being a tail? Yes, be special and look for the keys with which to open up the hearts of your mother, father, wife and children. Find the key to the heart of your manager at work and your colleagues. Knowing the keys to their hearts helps them accept good advice when it is offered, that is if the advice is presented in an appropriate manner, as people do not all react the same way when advised.

Once, the Prophet ﷺ was sitting in a blessed gathering of his and speaking to his companions, meanwhile, a man entered the mosque, looking to his left and right. Then, instead of sitting in the Prophet's circle, he headed for a corner of the mosque and began to undo his lower garment. The people were left in suspense as to what he is going to do next. Then, to their horror, he raised his lower garment, sat down quite calmly and began to urinate!

The Companions were shocked and exploded upon seeing him urinate in the mosque. They were about to rush towards him, but the Prophet ﷺ asked them to stay seated and keep their calm; he said, "Do not interrupt him!" The Companions watched as he urinated and perhaps he wasn't even aware of them looking on! The Prophet ﷺ, as he witnessed the scene – a man urinating in the mosque – continued to calm his Companions down. How forbearing he was! When the Bedouin had finished and stood up to tie his garment around his waist, the Prophet ﷺ called him gently. The Bedouin came and stood in front of the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ said, "The mosques are not built for this purpose. They are only built for prayers and reading of the Qur'an."

This was end of his brief advice.

The man understood the Prophet's words and left. When the time for prayer came, the Bedouin came and prayed along with them. The Prophet ﷺ initiated the prayer with his Companions by saying "Allahu Akbar". He then recited and bowed. When he raised up from bowing, he said, "Allah hears the one who praises Him." The Companions said, "Our Lord, to you belong all the praise!" Except that this man added, "O Allah, have mercy on me and Muhammad, and no one else!"

The Prophet ﷺ heard him, and when the prayer finished, he turned around and asked who said those words. The Companions pointed out the man to him, so he asked him to come forward. When he came and sat in front of him, lo and behold, it was the same Bedouin. The Prophet's love had entered into his heart so deeply that he wished that the Prophet and he be the

recipients of Allah's mercy exclusively.

The Prophet ﷺ said to him, "You have narrowed what is vast!" Meaning that Allah's mercy was enormous enough to include them two and everyone else, so it should not have been restricted to the two of them only. Notice how the Prophet ﷺ managed to capture his heart by knowing how to deal with him, for he was a Bedouin who had just come from the desert. He could not be expected to be as knowledgeable as Abu Bakr and 'Umar, or even Mu'adh and 'Ammar, and hence he should not be treated like them either.

Let's look at the case of Mu'awiyah bin al-Hakm, – may Allah be pleased with him – who was just a regular Companion. He did not live in Madinah, or even accompany the Prophet ﷺ often; rather, he had cattle in the desert to tend to. One day, Mu'awiyah entered Madinah and visited the mosque. He sat in the gathering of the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions as they were discussing the etiquettes of sneezing. One of the etiquettes the Prophet ﷺ taught was that if one hears his brother sneeze and then praise Allah, he should say to him 'YarhamukAllah' (i.e., 'May Allah have mercy on you'). Mu'awiyah committed this to his memory and left. After a few days he returned to Madinah to fulfil a need and entered the mosque where the Prophet ﷺ was praying with his Companions, so he joined them. As they were praying, one of the Companions sneezed, and before he could say "al-Hamdulillah", Mu'awiyah remembered that he was supposed to respond, so he hurriedly said in a loud voice, "YarhamukAllah!" The people who were praying became confused and began to look at him with disapproving looks. When he noticed the commotion he became confused and said, "Woe be to me! Why are you staring

at me?!"

The Companions began to strike their hands on their thighs, insisting that he be silent, and he complied. When the prayer was over, the Prophet ﷺ turned to the congregation. He had heard the commotion and the voice of the one who spoke, but the voice had belonged to a new, unfamiliar person. He asked, 'Who spoke?' and the people pointed at Mu'awiyah. The Prophet ﷺ asked him to come forward and he did. He was terrified as he didn't know what would happen to him for interrupting the prayer and ruining people's concentration.

Mu'awiyah said, "May my mother and father be sacrificed for him! By Allah, I have never seen before him nor after him a leader who gave better instruction than he. I swear that he did not scold, beat or revile me, but simply said: 'Talking to people is not befitting during the prayer, for it consists of glorifying Allah, declaring his Greatness. and recitation of the Qur'an.' This is how brief his advice was."

Mu'waiyah understood the advice and when he felt more comfortable, he began to ask the Prophet ﷺ about certain personal matters. He said, "O Messenger of Allah. I was till recently a pagan, but Allah has brought Islam to us; among us there are men who have recourse to soothsayers." Soothsayers are those who claim to know the unseen, and people go to them to ask thereof.

The Prophet ﷺ said in response, "Do not have recourse to them." Meaning, you are a Muslim and no one knows the unseen except Allah.

He said, "There are men who take omens." Meaning, they

predict bad luck by looking at the flight patterns of birds.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "That is something which they find in their breasts, but let it not turn their way." Meaning, let it not prevent them from doing what is best, for these omens can neither harm nor benefit.

This is how the Prophet ﷺ dealt with the man who urinated in the mosque and the man who spoke during the prayer, taking into consideration their situation, since people in their position are bound to make mistakes.

But as for Mu'adh bin Jabal ﷺ, then he was from the closest of the Companions to the Prophet ﷺ, and the most eager of them to learn. The way the Prophet ﷺ would deal with him would differ from the way he would deal with anyone else.

Mu'adh would pray 'Isha with the Prophet ﷺ, and then return to his people to lead them in 'Isha in their mosque. Hence, the second prayer for him would be voluntary but obligatory for those praying behind him. One night, Mu'adh ﷺ returned to his people, entered the mosque and initiated the prayer. A young man also entered the mosque and joined the congregation. When Mu'adh finished al-Fatihah by saying, "walad-daalleen" and the people said, "Ameen", Mu'adh began to recite Surah al-Baqarah! It needs stating that in those days, people would tirelessly work in the fields and with their cattle all day long. They would impatiently wait for 'Isha so they could go to sleep.

The young man joined the congregation as Mu'adh continued to recite. When the prayer became too long for him to bear, he isolated himself from the congregation, finished the prayer on his own, and left the mosque for his house. When Mu'adh finished

the prayer, some people said to him, "O Mu'adh, so-and-so joined our congregation, but since your prayer was too long he left." Mu'adh became angry and said, "He has the disease of hypocrisy! I will inform the Prophet ﷺ about him!"

They told the young man what Mu'adh had said. He replied, "And indeed, I too will inform the Prophet ﷺ of what he has done!"

They went to the Prophet ﷺ and Mu'adh told him what the young man had done.

The man replied, "O Messenger of Allah, he stays with you for a long time, and then comes to us and prays for a long time. By Allah, O Messenger of Allah, we go late to the prayer knowing that Mu'adh will prolong the prayer."

The Prophet ﷺ asked Mu'adh, "What do you recite?"

Mu'adh informed the Prophet ﷺ that he would recite al-Baqarah and other long Surahs. The Prophet ﷺ became angry when he realised that the people delayed attending the prayer because he prolonged the prayer. He now knew why the people felt overburdened with the prayer. He turned to Mu'adh and said, "Are you a troublemaker, O Mu'adh?" Meaning, why are you distressing the people and repelling them from the religion? Recite, "was-Sama'i wat-Tariq", "was-Sama'i That al-Buruj", "was-Shamsi wa Dhuhaha" and "wal-layli itha yaghsha."

He then turned to the young man and said very kindly, "What do you do, dear nephew, when you pray?"

He said, "I recite the Fatihah, then I ask Allah for paradise and seek His refuge from Hell." The man then remembered that he

often saw the Prophet ﷺ making long supplications and Mu'adh doing the same. He said, "I do not know what you and Mu'adh chant." Meaning, I do not know what type of long supplication you make.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Mu'adh and I make the same supplication." Meaning, they both make supplications about paradise and hell.

The young man was greatly affected by Mu'adh's accusation of hypocrisy against him. He said, "Rather, Mu'adh will come to know on the day the people come to tell us that the enemy is approaching!" Meaning, Mu'adh will discover what I will do in Jihad in the path of Allah, where my faith will become clear to Mu'adh, as he has accused me of hypocrisy.

Not long afterwards, there occurred a battle in which the young man was martyred. When the Prophet ﷺ found out about it, he said to Mu'adh, "What happened to your opponent?" Meaning, the one you accused of hypocrisy, O Mu'adh.

Mu'adh said, "O Messenger of Allah, he was truthful and was not a hypocrite. He has been martyred."

Notice the difference between people's nature and their status, and how it affected the Prophet's way of dealing with them. Look at how the Prophet ﷺ dealt with Usamah bin Zayd, who was from the most beloved of all people to him, as he had grown up in his house...

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ dispatched a group of his Companions to al-Huraqat, a sub-tribe of Juhaynah. Usamah bin Zayd was one of the warriors. The battle commenced in the morning,

the Muslims became victorious and the enemy fled. A man from amongst the pagans saw that his men were defeated, so he threw his weapons and fled. A man from the Ansar and Usamah began to chase him as he attempted to escape in terror, until he hid behind a tree. Usamah and the Ansari caught up with him and raised their swords to strike him. When he saw the two swords above his head about to come down on him, and realised that death was at his doorstep, he said, "There is no one worthy of worship but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger!" Usamah and the Ansari were puzzled; did he accept Islam sincerely or did he simply say this to save his neck? They were in the middle of a battle and surrounded by bodies, blood and flesh, as the man looked on. They had to make a quick decision, for they could have been struck by an arrow anytime. There was no time to contemplate. While the Ansari withheld, Usamah thought that it was a trick, so he struck him with his sword and killed him.

They returned to Madinah victorious. Usamah stood in front of the Prophet ﷺ and told him the entire story, including what happened to the man they killed. The story was that of Muslim victory, and the Prophet ﷺ was rejoicing, that is, until Usamah said, "Then I killed him..."

Suddenly, the Prophet's complexion changed and he said, "He said: La ilaha illallah and you killed him?!"

Usamah said, "He did not say it intentionally! He only said it out of the fear of our weapons!"

But the Prophet ﷺ repeated his question, "Did he say, 'There is no god worthy of worship but Allah,' and then you killed him? Did you split open his heart to know for certain that he had only

said it out of fear of your weapons?"

The Prophet ﷺ fixed his eyes on Usamah and kept repeating, "Did he say 'There is no god but Allah', and then you killed him?! Did he say 'There is no god but Allah', and then you killed him?! How will you deal with his testimony, 'there is no god but Allah', on the Day of Resurrection?"

Usamah said, "He continued to repeat himself until I wished I had only accepted Islam that day."

An opinion

Do not think that people are of a similar nature. Rather, they differ tremendously.

(18)

Choose the right topics

Following on from the previous chapter, is the subject of the way to talk to people and what to talk about. When someone converses with another person, he should talk about subjects that are suitable. The topic he may choose to discuss with a youth would be quite different to that which he would choose to discuss with the elderly. The type of conversation he has with a scholar would not be the same as that with a layman. Similarly, the words used with one's wife would not be the same as those used with his sister.

This is not to say that the topic must be completely different for each person, such that a story one may relate to his sister should never be related to his wife, or what is said to a young can never be repeated to the elderly. Not at all. What is being referred to here is the way in which the story is related differs.

By way of example, imagine if one were to sit with some elderly guests, over eighty years old, who had come to visit one's grandfather, would it be appropriate for him to laugh and joke while discussing what he did with his friends at the beach, and relate how well his friend played football? No doubt this would be inappropriate. Similarly, when speaking to small children, it would not be suitable to relate various stories concerning how

husbands should treat their wives.

It is agreed upon, therefore, that from the ways of attracting others, is to choose the topics they like to discuss. For instance, if there is a father who has an intelligent son, it would be appropriate to ask about him, as the father would most definitely be proud of him and love to discuss the subject. Likewise, there may be a person who has just opened up a shop and be making a handsome profit, and thus it would be appropriate to ask about his shop and customers as this is what would please him. He would therefore love to sit and discuss this time and time again.

The Prophet ﷺ would take this into consideration, and hence, the nature of his speech with young men would be different to that with the elderly, or with women and children.

Jabir bin 'Abdullah رضي الله عنه was a great Companion. His father was killed at Uhud, and he had left behind Jabir's nine sisters with no one to take care of them. He had also left behind a huge debt to be paid off, all on the shoulders of this youth who was still very young. Because of this, Jabir was always anxious and thinking about his sisters and his debt, as the creditors were demanding payment day and night.

Jabir journeyed with the Prophet ﷺ on the Dhat ar-Riqa' expedition. Due to his extreme poverty, he was riding a very weak camel that could hardly walk. Jabir did not have enough money to buy another camel. As a result, everyone preceded him and he was the last in the caravan. The Prophet ﷺ was also at the end of the army, so he met Jabir as his camel walked slowly along. The Prophet ﷺ said, "What is wrong with you, O Jabir?"

He said, "This camel is slowing me down."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Kneel it down." Jabir knelt it down, as the Prophet ﷺ knelt his camel down, too.

The Prophet ﷺ then said, "Give me your whip, or break a branch off a tree." Jabir gave him his whip. The Prophet ﷺ took the whip and struck the camel with it gently, and the camel got up energetically. Jabir got hold of the camel and jumped on its back and went alongside the Prophet ﷺ happily. The camel had become very lively. The Prophet ﷺ turned to Jabir to converse with him. What was the topic that the Prophet ﷺ chose to discuss with him? Jabir was a young man, and young men are normally concerned about marriage and their livelihood.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "O Jabir, did you get married?"

He said, "Yes, I did."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "To a virgin or a previously married woman?"

He said, "Previously married."

The Prophet ﷺ was surprised at why a young man like him, who had married for the first time, had done so to a previously married woman. He said to Jabir in kindness, "Why didn't you marry a virgin so that you could fondle one other?"

Jabir said, "O Messenger of Allah, my father was martyred on the day of Uhud and left nine (orphan) daughters who are my nine sisters. I thus disliked to have another young girl of their age, and instead married someone older than them so she could be like their mother."

The Prophet ﷺ realised that the man he was speaking to was one who had sacrificed his own pleasures for his sisters. Thus,

the Prophet ﷺ decided to tell an appropriate joke for a youth of his age: He ﷺ said, "Perhaps, when we head for Madinah and stop over at Sarar (5 km from Madinah), your wife will hear of our arrival and lay out the pillows." Meaning, even if you married someone previously married, she will always remain your bride. She would rejoice upon your return, lay down the carpet and arrange on it pillows.

Jabir thought of his poverty and that of his sisters. He said, "Pillows?! By Allah, O Messenger of Allah, we do not have pillows!"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "InshaAllah, you will soon have pillows."

As the two continued on, the Prophet ﷺ wished to gift some money to Jabir, so he turned to him and said, "O Jabir!"

"At your service, O Messenger of Allah!" he replied.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Will you sell me your camel?" Jabir thought that the camel was his capital, and even though previously extremely weak, it had now become very strong! However, he thought it rude to reject the Prophet's offer. Thus he said, "Make an offer, O Messenger of Allah! How much will you pay?"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "A Dirham."

"A Dirham! You are cheating me, O Messenger of Allah", replied Jabir.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Two Dirhams."

"No. You are still cheating me, O Messenger of Allah..." replied Jabir.

They continued raising the price until it amounted to forty Dirhams, or an ounce of gold.

Jabir said, "Fine, but on the condition that I continue to ride it until we reach Madinah."

"Yes," agreed the Prophet ﷺ.

When they reached Madinah, Jabir went to his house and offloaded the camel. Then he went to pray with the Prophet ﷺ and tied his camel next to the mosque. When the Prophet ﷺ came out of the mosque, Jabir said to him, "This is your camel, O Messenger of Allah!" The Prophet ﷺ said, "O Bilal, give forty Dihrams to Jabir and more."

Bilal gave Jabir forty plus Dirhams. Jabir took the money in his hand and went away thinking about his situation and what he could do with the money. Should he buy a camel, or should he buy furniture for his house?

The Prophet ﷺ suddenly turned to Bilal and said, "O Bilal, take the camel and give it to Jabir." Bilal took it and went to see Jabir. When he arrived, Jabir was surprised and wondered if the Prophet ﷺ had cancelled the sale.

Bilal said, "Take the camel, O Jabir."

Jabir said, "Why? What's the news?"

Bilal said, "Allah's Messenger has ordered me to give you the camel and the money."

Jabir returned to the Prophet ﷺ and asked him what had happened. The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Do you think I haggled with you just to take your camel?" Meaning, I wasn't asking you to lower the price because I wanted to buy your camel. I only did

what I did to assist you with some money! How wonderful these manners were! He chose the appropriate topic to discuss with the young man, and when he decided to help him, he did so with great kindness and compassion.

One day, a young man called Julaybib was sitting next to the Prophet ﷺ. He was one of the best Companions but was poor and not very good looking. Which topic did the Prophet ﷺ raise with this young man, who was still unmarried? Did he discuss Arab lineages and which of them are nobler than others? Did he discuss the markets and the laws governing sales? No. Rather, he was a young man who preferred certain topics over others. Hence, the Prophet ﷺ asked him about marriage.

Julaybib replied, "You will find me unmarketable."

The Prophet ﷺ replied, "You are not so in the sight of Allah."

While the Prophet ﷺ was looking to get Julaybib married, there came to him a man from the Ansaar offering his previously married daughter to him in marriage. The Prophet ﷺ said, "I want to have your daughter married."

The man replied, "Most, definitely, O Messenger of Allah!"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Actually, I don't want her for myself."

"For whom then?" the man asked.

"For Julaybib" said the Prophet ﷺ.

The man became surprised and said, "Julaybib! Julaybib! O Messenger of Allah, allow me to ask her mother."

The man went to his wife and said, "The Prophet ﷺ is pro-

posing to your daughter."

She said, "How wonderful! Marry her off to the Messenger of Allah."

He said, "He doesn't want her for himself."

"For whom then?" she asked?

He said, "For Julaybib."

The woman was shocked at the idea of her daughter being married to an ugly poor man. She said, "Never! I swear I will not allow her to marry Julaybib! We haven't given her in marriage to so many others!"

The father was saddened. As he got up to leave to inform the Prophet ﷺ, the girl shouted from her room, "Who proposed for me?"

They said, "The Messenger of Allah."

She said, "Are you rejecting the Prophet's request? Send me to him, for he shall certainly not bring ruin to me." Thereafter, her father went to the Prophet ﷺ and said, "O Messenger of Allah, the choice is yours, so marry her off to Julaybib if so you wish." The Prophet ﷺ married her off to Julaybib and prayed for them, "O Lord, bestow good on them in abundance and make not their life one of toil and trouble."

It wasn't long before the Prophet ﷺ went out on an expedition with Julaybib accompanying him. After the battle, people began searching for those missing. The Prophet ﷺ asked them, "Have you lost anyone?" They said, "I have lost so-and-so." He remained silent for a while and then asked again, "Are you missing anyone?" They said, "We are missing so-and-so." He remained

silent for a while and then asked again, "Have you lost anyone?" and they replied, "Yes, so-and-so."

The Prophet ﷺ then said, "I have lost Julaybib."

The Companions began to search for him amongst the dead but did not find him on the battlefield. They then found him nearby, next to seven pagans whom he had killed before being killed himself. The Prophet ﷺ stood watching his body and said, "He killed seven and then he was killed. He killed seven and then he was killed. He is of me and I am of him."

The Prophet ﷺ took him in his arms and ordered the Companions to dig a grave for him. Anas said, "As we dug the grave, Julaybib was resting in the arms of Allah's Messenger ﷺ, until the grave was dug and he placed Julaybib in it. By Allah, there was no previously married woman amongst the Ansaar who received more proposals after that than Julaybib's wife."

This is how the Prophet ﷺ would decide on the appropriate topic of conversation, so as to not bore his guests.

One day, he was sitting with his wife 'A'ishah. What would be the most appropriate subject to talk about with one's wife? Did he speak to her about the expedition of Rome? The types of weapons used in battles? No, for she was not Abu Bakr. Did he speak to her about poor Muslims and their needs? No, for she was not 'Uthman. Rather, he said to her, lovingly, "I know when you are pleased with me and when you are angry."

"How is that?" She replied

He said, "When you are pleased you say: 'No, by the Lord of Muhammad! And when you are angry you say: 'No, by the Lord

of Ibrahim!"

She said, "Yes, by Allah, O Messenger of Allah! But I do not put aside anything except your name!"

Do we take these factors into consideration today?

A point of view...

Talk about what others like to hear, not what you like to relate.

(19)

Be kind at the first meeting

It was the habit in some rural areas of old Egypt that a groom before his wedding night would hide a cat in his room. On the wedding night, when alone with his wife, he would move a chair slightly to so as to free the cat. He would then demonstrate his might to his wife by getting hold of the poor cat and strangling it to death! Why? So that the first impression of him imprinted in the mind of his wife would be one of awe!

When I graduated from university and took up a position as an instructor at a college, a senior instructor advised me, saying, "Be stern with the students during your first lesson and stare at them with furious eyes so they will be in awe of you from the very beginning." I remembered this as I was writing this chapter and realised that one thing everyone would agree upon is that the first meeting imprints 70% of an impression on one's mind. This is referred to as the "first impressions."

A group of officers once travelled to the USA to attend a training program on interpersonal skills in the work environment. On the first day, they arrived early to the classroom and began chatting in order to get to know one other. Suddenly, the instructor walked in and they fell silent. The instructor's eyes fell upon a student who was still smiling.

"Why are you laughing?" He screamed.

The student replied: "I'm sorry, I wasn't laughing."

"You were!" screamed the instructor, and chastised him further, saying, "You are not a serious student! You should return to your family on the next available flight! I cannot teach your likes!"

The poor student felt embarrassed and gazed at the instructor and then at his colleagues in confusion. The instructor then frowned at him, pointed to the exit and said, "Get out!"

The student got up frightened and left the room. The instructor looked at the rest of the students and said, "I am Dr. So-and-so. I will be teaching you such-and-such a subject. But before I begin, I would like you to fill in a questionnaire without writing your names on them." He then distributed the questionnaires to the students. The questionnaire was about the instructor's performance and had five questions:

1. How do you find your teacher?
2. How do you find his teaching?
3. Does your teacher allow opposing views to be aired?
4. Would you like to be taught by him again?
5. Would you like to meet him outside the institution?

Every question had multiple choices; Excellent, good, fair, poor. The students filled in the questionnaire and returned it to the instructor. The instructor began his lecture on interpersonal skills in an office environment, and in the middle of the lecture he said, "Oh! Why should we deprive your colleague of this lesson?" He went out of the classroom, shook the hand of the ejected

student with a smile, and brought him back in.

He then said, "I think I lashed out at you a little while ago without any particular reason. I am having some personal problems due to which I behave quite erratically at times, so I beg your pardon. You are, after all, a committed student, and the proof of that is the fact that you left behind your wife and children to come all the way here. I would like to thank you, in fact all of you, for your commitment. I am very honoured to be your instructor."

He was, thereafter, very light-hearted with his students.

He then picked up more copies of the questionnaire and said, "Since your colleague didn't get the chance to fill in the questionnaire, how about if you all were to fill it in again?" He handed out the questionnaire and they filled them all in and returned them to the instructor. He then took the previous questionnaires and the new ones and began to compare between the two, to discover that the 'poor' boxes in first set of questionnaires were all checked, while the second set of questionnaires did not have a single check against 'poor', or even 'fair'.

The instructor laughed and said, "What you just witnessed was a demonstration of the ill effects of the lack of interpersonal skills in the work environment. What I did to your colleague was an example of this which I wished to demonstrate to you all. Note how your views of me changed as I changed the way I dealt with you!"

This is all part of human nature, and hence, one must take this into consideration, especially with those he meets for the first time.

The Prophet ﷺ would also capture people's hearts the first time he met them. After the conquest of Makkah and when Islam had become dominant, the Prophet ﷺ started to receive envoys from various tribes. One of the envoys the Prophet ﷺ received was from 'Abd al-Qays. When they arrived, before they could even dismount from their rides, the Prophet ﷺ said to them, "Welcome, O people! May you never face disgrace or sorrow, so have glad tidings!"

As they dismounted from their camels, they raced to the Prophet ﷺ to greet him. They said, "O Messenger of Allah, between our cities there lies a dwelling of a group of pagans from Mudhar, due to which we cannot come to you except in the sacred months, since this is when Arabs do not fight, so guide us to the best thing we can do, which if we were to do it, would cause us to enter paradise, and which we would instruct others to do also.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "I shall order you to do four things and forbid you from four. I order you to have faith in Allah. Do you know what it means to have faith in Allah?"

They replied, "Allah and His Messenger know best."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "It means to testify that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah, to establish the prayers, to give in charity, and to give a fifth of the war booty in charity."

I also forbid you from four; from drinking from ad-Dubba, an-Naqir, (pitched water skins), az-Zuruf, al-Muzaffat and al-Hantam (names of utensils used for the preparation of alcoholic drinks).' (al-Bukhari)

On another occasion, the Prophet ﷺ was travelling with a group of his Companions at night. They travelled for a long time until the last part of the night fell upon them, and they decided to stop over and sleep. They were overcome by deep sleep until sunrise. The first one to awaken was Abu Bakr, and then 'Umar. Abu Bakr sat next to the Prophet ﷺ and began to say "Allahu Akbar" aloud until the Prophet ﷺ also woke up and prayed Fajr with his Companions. When he had not finished the prayer, he realised that one of the Companions had not joined them.

The Prophet ﷺ said, 'What prevented you from praying with us?'

He replied, "I had a wet-dream and didn't find water to bathe with." The Prophet ﷺ ordered him to perform Tayammum with dust. The Companion then prayed and thereafter they continued on their journey, and none of them had any water. On the way they became extremely thirsty and were unable to find any well or water.

'Imran bin Husayn ﷺ said, "As we were travelling, we found a woman on a camel with two leather sacks (filled with water). We said to her: 'Where can we find water?' She said: 'There is no water here.' We said: 'How far away is the water from your house?' She said: 'One whole day.' We said: 'Go to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.' She said: 'What is a Messenger of Allah?!'

"We took her with us to Allah's Messenger in the hope that she would tell us the location of the water. The Prophet ﷺ asked her about the water and she responded with what she had responded to us earlier, and further complained that she had orphans to look after. The Prophet ﷺ took hold of her water con-

tainer, mentioned Allah's name on it, and then wiped over it and began to pour the water from her container into our utensils. All forty of us drank from it until our thirst was quenched. We filled our utensils with water and left hers, which now carried more water than they did before.

"The Prophet ﷺ then said, 'Bring what you have (i.e., of food).' We collected pieces of bread and dates for her. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'Take this to your family, and know that we have not decreased your water at all; it is only that Allah has quenched our thirst.'

"The woman then mounted her camel happily after receiving food and went home. When she returned, she said: 'I met a magician, or perhaps a prophet as they claim...'

"Her family were amazed at her story with the Prophet ﷺ, and it wasn't long before they all accepted Islam.'" (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

This woman was amazed by the Prophet's treatment and generosity in her very first meeting with him.

One day, a man came to the Prophet ﷺ asking him for material aid. The Prophet ﷺ gave him a portion of his cattle. The man returned to his people and said, "Accept Islam, for Muhammad gives like a man who doesn't fear poverty!"

Anas رضي الله عنه said, "The man would come to the Prophet ﷺ solely for worldly reasons, but afterwards his religion became more precious to him than the whole world and all that exists therein." (Muslim)

A suggestion...

The first meeting imprints 70% of the impression that one has of a person on his mind. Thus, one should treat a person as if it is the first and last time he will ever meet him.

(20)

People are like the minerals of the earth

If we reflect upon our experiences with others, we find that people have different natures like the varying nature of the land. There are those who are soft, and those who are hard. There are those who are generous, like a fertile land, and those who are miserly, like a barren field that can neither hold water, nor produce fruit. People, therefore, differ immensely.

On reflection, we know that various terrains are traversed in different ways. The manner in which solid ground is walked upon is certainly not the way soft ground is. One would be relaxed walking on the former while apprehensive on the latter. Human beings are of a similar nature.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah created Adam from a handful of dust taken from different lands, so the children of Adam have been created according to the composition of the land. Therefore from mankind we have red, white, black and what comes in between these; we have good and evil, easygoing and sorrowful." (Abu Dawud and at-Tirmidhi who said it Hasan Sahih)

Bear this in mind when dealing with others whether they are close, such as fathers, mothers, wives or children, or otherwise, such as neighbours, colleagues or even shopkeepers.

People's various natures and temperaments have an effect on their decisions. To prove this point, carry out the following experiment: If you ever have a problem with your wife, ask a friend of yours, whom you know to be harsh, for advice. Say to him, "My wife is giving me problems. She does not treat me with respect. What should I do?"

He would probably respond with, "Women can only be controlled by terror, fury and rage! Have a strong personality and show her that you are a man!" If you follow this advice, you may subsequently return home and as a result, break up your family.

Now, try another friend whom you know to be soft and gentle. Tell him what you told your previous friend. You will find that he would probably say something like, "Dear brother, she is the mother of your children. All marriages have problems. Have patience with her regardless of what happens. She is, after all, your wife and your life partner."

Note how a person's nature affects his views and decisions. For this reason, the Prophet ﷺ forbade that a judge should pass a verdict when he is either thirsty, hungry or even feeling the urge to answer the call of nature. This is because these matters may affect a person, and subsequently influence his decisions and judgements.

In a previous era, there lived a mass murderer. Yes, a mass murderer who did not kill one, two, or even ten people. No, he had killed ninety-nine. I have no idea how this man managed to escape revenge; perhaps, he was so ruthless that none would ever dare approach him, or perhaps he kept in hiding. The important fact here though is that he was guilty of ninety-nine mur-

ders. One day, the idea of repentance crossed his mind, so he decided to ask the most knowledgeable scholar in the world. People pointed him in the direction of a monk in a monastery who would never leave his prayer mat, spending all his time praying to Allah and weeping.

The man visited the monk, stood in front of him and asked, "I have killed ninety-nine souls. Could I still repent?"

How could this monk, who I think if he were to have killed an ant mistakenly would have spent the rest of his life weeping, respond to a person who had murdered ninety-nine people with his bare hands? The monk was furious. It was as if the man standing in front of him was the embodiment of the ninety-nine corpses! He yelled, "There is no repentance for you! There is no repentance for you!"

It should come as no surprise that such a response would be given by a monk who lacked knowledge and made emotional decisions. When the murderer heard this response he was enraged. Being the callous person he was, he grabbed a knife and repeatedly stabbed the monk, cutting him into pieces, then stormed out of the monastery.

After some time, he thought about repentance once again. He enquired about the most knowledgeable person he could ask, and the people referred him to a scholar. When he visited the scholar, he found him to be sedate and god-fearing.

The murderer came forward and asked, "I have killed a hundred people. Could I still repent?"

The scholar instantly replied, "SubhaanAllah! What could prevent you from repenting?"

What a wonderful response! Who could prevent a person from repentance? The Lord is in the heavens and there is no power on earth that can prevent a person from repenting to Him submissively.

This scholar, who had made his statement based on knowledge and upon Allah's Law as opposed to his whims and emotions, said to the man, "However, you are in an evil land." Strange! How did he know that? He gathered this by knowing the magnitude of the man's crime and the absence of anyone to forbid him. He realised that murder and oppression had become a norm in that city, so much so that nobody had any concern for the plight of the oppressed.

He said, "You are in an evil land." Meaning, you must leave here and go to such-and-such a land where there are people worshipping Allah and join them in worshipping Him.

The man set out for that land but died before reaching it. The angels of mercy and those of punishment descended to take his soul. The angels of mercy argued that he had been on his way to repenting and returning to Allah. The angels of wrath argued that he had not done any good in his entire life. Therefore, Allah sent an angel in the form of a man to settle their dispute. He judged that the distance between the two cities be measured, and that the man be judged according to whichever of the two he had been closer to. Allah inspired the city of mercy to be closer and the city of disobedience to be farther. It was thus discovered that he had been closer to the city of virtue. The angels of mercy therefore took the man's soul.

Unfortunately, many of those who pass verdicts in Islamic

matters as well as some who seek them are often carried away by emotion. I recall one of my neighbours who often had arguments with his wife. One day he had a terrible one due to which he divorced her once, and then took her back. After that, he had another one due to which he divorced her again, only to take her back again. Each time I would meet him, I would remind him of the seriousness of divorce as well as of his responsibilities towards his small children. I would often say to him, "You only have one divorce left – the third one. If you were to divorce her again, she would no longer be yours and would not be allowed to marry you again except after having married another man and then being divorced from him, so fear Allah and do not destroy your household."

One day, he came to me again in a worried state and said, "Dear Shaykh, we had an argument again and I have divorced her for the third time!" Although I was not surprised at this, I was shocked when he continued, "Would you happen to know of a beloved Shaykh who can pass a verdict allowing me to take her back?"

On reflection, I came to realise what we have just mentioned above, that many people's views – or even legal rulings – vary due to their nature and emotional state. Some people are known to love wealth by nature. One should not be surprised to see them humiliating themselves in front of the wealthy. Such people would neglect their own children in order to accumulate wealth and would hardly spend on those under their responsibility. This should come as no surprise, bearing in mind their greedy nature, as the fact is that most of the decisions they make and opinions they hold are based on their nature.

If one wishes to deal with a person of this nature or make a request of him, then he should bear in mind, before speaking to him, his love for wealth, and then endeavour to not conflict with his nature in order to attain success with him. An example will illustrate this point: Suppose one bumps into an old university colleague and therefore invites him home for lunch, which he agrees to; one would then need to go shopping in order to purchase the required foods as well as time and effort in order to prepare the lunch. Suppose he then phones up some of his other old friends asking them to come around to meet this colleague... Amongst these friends may be a miser whose heart is captured by the love of wealth. He may be delighted to hear the voice of the caller, but would say when he hears about the lunch appointment, "Oh! How I wish I could come and meet so-and-so, but I am too busy with other things right now. Please do convey my greetings to him though. Perhaps, I will see him another time." It is known by this person's nature that he did not wish to come, fearing that he too would have to invite this colleague for lunch, which would cost him!

Therefore, one would say to such a person, "Well, he is not in town for long. He will most probably leave straight after the lunch."

The friend would then say, "Oh, I see! In that case, I will delay what I have to do and come and see him!"

Other people tend to be socially restricted to their families. A person of this nature would always love to be with his family and could not bear leaving them. One could ask him for anything except for being parted from his children, even for a short while,

as that would be too much for him to tolerate.

The amazing person in this regard is he who is able to capture all kinds of hearts. If he travels with a miser, he wins the heart of his companion by being economical. If he sits with the emotional, he too is emotional towards them and so they love him. If he accompanies the light-hearted, he makes jokes and laughs along with them, thereby winning their hearts. He deals with each situation accordingly.

Look at the conduct of the Prophet ﷺ as he advanced with his many battalions to conquer Makkah. Before the conquest, Abu Sufyan visited the Prophet ﷺ and accepted Islam. When he became a Muslim, al-'Abbas said to the Prophet ﷺ, "O Messenger of Allah, Abu Sufyan is a man who loves pride and honour, so please offer him something."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Yes, whoever enters the house of Abu Sufyan is safe. Whoever locks himself in his house is safe. Whoever enters the Mosque is safe."

When Abu Sufyan set off to return to Makkah, the Prophet ﷺ looked at him and thought that this is the man who mobilised the Quraysh to fight him at Badr, Uhud and then Khandaq. He was a leader who had spent many years of his life in wars. Since he was a new Muslim, the Prophet ﷺ wanted to show him the strength of Islam.

The Prophet ﷺ said to al-'Abbas, "O 'Abbas!"

"At your service, O Messenger of Allah!" replied al-'Abbas.

He said, "Delay Abu Sufyan in the narrow pass of the valley so that he can witness the armies of Allah as they pass by him."

Al-'Abbas took Abu Sufyan to the narrow pass of the valley just as the armies began to flood into Makkah. The battalions, one by one, began to pass by him. When he saw the first battalion, he asked, 'Who are they, O 'Abbas?'

Al-'Abbas replied, "They are Sulaym."

Abu Sufyan said, "What do I have to do with Sulaym?"

When the second battalion passed by, he asked, "Who are they, O 'Abbas?"

Al-'Abbas replied, "They are Muzaynah."

Abu Sufyan said, "What do I have to do with Muzaynah?"

Every time a different battalion passed by, Abu Sufyan asked the same question and made the same statement in response to al-'Abbas', until there finally came the Messenger of Allah ﷺ with his Green Army, surrounded by the Muhajirun and the Ansaar. Their bodies were covered with shields and nothing of them was to be seen except their eyes.

Abu Sufyan said, "SubhaanAllah! O 'Abbas, Who are these people?"

Al-'Abbas said, "This is the Messenger of Allah ﷺ amongst the Muhajirun and the Ansar."

He said, "This is the army of death! By Allah, nobody could ever challenge this army!"

He then said, "By Allah, O Abu al-Fadl, your nephew's kingdom has expanded!"

Al-'Abbas said, "O Abu Sufyan, this is prophethood!"

"Prophethood, it certainly is!" replied Abu Sufyan.

When the armies had passed by, al-'Abbas told him to rush back and warn his people. Abu Sufyan quickly went back to Makkah and began to shout at the top of his voice, "O Quraysh! Muhammad is approaching with an army you cannot match! Whoever enters the house of Abu Sufyan shall be safe!"

The people said, "May Allah curse you! What good will your house do us?"

He said, "Whoever shuts himself in his house is safe! Whoever seeks refuge in the Mosque is also safe!" The people dispersed into their houses and some entered the Mosque. How wonderful was the Prophet ﷺ to have such a positive effect on Abu Sufyan!

A person's nature and personality should be understood before he is spoken to, as this would assist a great deal when dealing with him.

At the expedition known as al-Hudaybiyah, the Prophet ﷺ left with the Muhajirun and Ansaar as well as other Arabs for 'Umrah. They numbered a thousand and four-hundred altogether. They had taken with them animals to slaughter and had made the Ihraam, so it was known that they were heading to visit the House in its honour. The Prophet ﷺ took with him seventy camels to slaughter in the Haram. When they approached Makkah, the Quraysh prevented them from going further, so the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions camped at a place called al-Hudaybiyah. The Quraysh then began sending messages to the Prophet ﷺ, one after the other, to bargain with him.

They first dispatched to him Mikraz bin Hafs. Mikraz was from Quraysh but was not known for keeping to his agreements.

As a matter of fact, he was an evil and treacherous person. When the Prophet ﷺ saw him approaching he said, "He is a treacherous person." When he came to the Prophet ﷺ, the Prophet ﷺ spoke to him in the way that he deserved, and further informed him that he had not come to fight; rather, he had only come to perform 'Umrah. The Prophet ﷺ did not sign any agreement with him as he knew he never kept his promises.

Mikraz returned to the Quraysh without any result. They then sent Halis bin 'Alqama, the chieftain of the Ahabish, who were allies of the Quraysh. They had settled in Makkah in honour of the Haram and in the service of the Ka'bah.

When the Prophet ﷺ saw Halis he said, "This man is from a people who think highly of animal sacrifice. Drive the sacrificial animals in full view of him so that he can see them." When he saw the sacrificial animals and realised that they had been brought all the way to Makkah to be sacrificed at the Ka'bah, he became worried. He didn't even meet the Prophet ﷺ, for how could he have even thought of preventing them when they had so obviously come solely to perform 'Umrah. He therefore returned immediately to the Quraysh and told them his opinion frankly.

The Quraysh said, "Sit down! You are simply a nomad Arab. You have no idea regarding plots and conspiracies."

Al-Halis became angry and said, "O Quraysh! By Allah, this is not what we pledged allegiance to you upon. Are you going to prevent someone who comes to honour the House of Allah? By the One who has the soul of al-Halis in His Hand, you must allow Muhammad to perform 'Umrah, or I will leave along with

all of my tribe!"

They said, "Refrain! Let us decide for ourselves what we wish!"

They then decided to send an honourable person from Quraysh, so they chose 'Urwah bin Mas'ud at-Thaqafi.

He said, "O Quraysh, I have seen the response given to you by some of those you have already sent. You know that you are like the father and I am the son."

They said, "You are correct. We cannot accuse you of anything."

'Urwah was one of the leaders amongst his people who was much honoured and respected. He went to the Prophet ﷺ and said, "O Muhammad! You have gathered all these people and returned to your birthplace. The Quraysh have come out and pledged to Allah that you will not enter Makkah by force against their will. By Allah, all these people around you may well desert you!"

Abu Bakr was standing behind the Prophet ﷺ. When he heard this, he said, "Go and suck on the clitoris of al-Laat! Would we desert him?"

'Urwah being a leader of his people was shocked at the response, for he was not used to such language. However, he needed a dose of this medicine to treat the arrogance he carried.

'Urwah said, "Who is this, O Muhammad?"

He said, "This is Ibn Abi Quhafah."

'Urwah said, "By the One who has my soul in His Hand, had

it not been for a favour you gave to me and which I never repaid, I would have given you a similar response."

'Urwah then began using mild and measured expressions. As he spoke to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, he would attempt to stroke his beard. While this was happening, al-Mughirah bin Shu'bah at-Thaqafi stood beside the Prophet ﷺ with an iron mask covering his face. As 'Urwah would bring his hand closer to the Prophet's beard, al-Mughirah would thrust it away with his sword. 'Urwah repeated his act and al-Mughirah did the same. When 'Urwah reached out for the Prophet's beard for the third time, al-Mughirah said, "Draw back your hand from the face of Allah's Messenger before you lose it!" Meaning, before I cut it off.

'Urwah said, "Woe to you! How crude and coarse you are! Who is this, O Muhammad?"

The Prophet ﷺ smiled and said, "He is your nephew, al-Mughirah bin Shu'bah at-Thaqafi."

'Urwah said, "You'd do this, you traitor? It was only yesterday that I washed away your treachery!"

'Urwah then left the Prophet ﷺ and returned to Quraysh and said, "O Quraysh! By Allah, I have met Kisra, Caesar and Negus, but by Allah, I have not seen a king being honoured by his people the way Muhammad is honoured by his Companions." Upon hearing this awestruck man, the Quraysh were left awe-struck themselves. They then decided to send Suhayl bin 'Amr instead. Suhayl went to the Prophet ﷺ and when the Prophet ﷺ saw him he said, "The matter is now easy to resolve." They then wrote the well-known pledge of al-Hudaybiyah.

This was a demonstration of the Prophet's recognition of different personalities and the correct approach of dealing with each individual based on his personal merit and individuality.

The variance in people's personalities is noticeable by analysing the way they react to the various stories or incidents that are related to them. One can carry out this experiment himself: Try relating a sad story to a group of people and see how differently people react.

I recall delivering a Friday sermon once wherein I mentioned the story of 'Umar's assassination. When I came to the part where Abu Lu'lu' the Magian stabbed 'Umar, I said in a loud voice, "Suddenly, Abu Lu'lu' jumped at 'Umar and stabbed him three times! The first stab hacked his chest. The second went into his stomach. Then, with all his strength, he thrust his sword into 'Umar below his navel and dragged the knife across his body until his intestines emerged."

I noticed that the people varied in their reaction to my words: Some closed their eyes as if they were witnessing the murder taking place in front of them.

Others wept.

Others showed no reaction at all, as if they were listening to a bedtime story.

You would witness a similar mixed reaction if you were to relate the story of Hamzah when he was killed in Uhud; how his stomach was cut open, his liver taken out, his ears cut off, and his nose mutilated, Hamzah, being the master of the martyrs and the lion of Allah and His Messenger ﷺ.

Another lesson that I have learnt from my life is that one will almost inevitably come across a person who is uncouth and ignorant. Neither can such a person articulate himself appropriately, nor is he courteous to his audience.

I recall such a person sitting in a public gathering where he decided to relate an incident involving a shopkeeper. As he related the story he said, "This shopkeeper was huge, like a donkey!" He then said, "He looked like Khalid!' while pointing at the person next to him! I have no idea how he managed to liken poor Khalid to a donkey!

Before ending this chapter, an important question must be answered: Can one change his own personality to suit that of the one he is interacting with?

The answer is: Yes!

'Umar – may Allah be pleased with him – was known for his strong personality. One day, a man quarrelled with his wife and came to 'Umar to ask him advice on how to deal with her. When he stood at 'Umar's door and was about to knock, he heard 'Umar's wife shouting at him while 'Umar remained silent. He neither shouted back, nor rebuked her!

The man was amazed, and turned back to leave. 'Umar heard a noise at the door, so he went out and called the man, "What do you need?"

He said, "O Amir al-Mu'minin, I came to you to complain about my wife, but then I heard your wife shouting at you!"

'Umar said, "She is my wife who sleeps with me, makes me food and washes my clothes. Shall I not be patient with her?"

For some people there is no solution, and with them one must remain patient. A person may complain to me about his father's anger or his wife's miserliness, and so on. I would suggest a few solutions only to hear he has tried all of them and has had no success! What then is the solution?

The solution is that one should remain patient with such people and try to ignore their bad traits in light of their virtues. They should try to accommodate them however much they can, for some problems simply have no solution.

The result...

Knowing the personality of the one you are dealing with helps you earn his love.

(21)

Mu'awiyah's hair

A teacher once worked in a secondary school. In one of his lessons, he noticed that some students were being negligent and lagging behind in their revision, so he decided to teach them a lesson. After a few days, when he entered the classroom, and as soon as he sat down, he stunned the students by saying, "Everyone, please put your books away and take out a paper and pen!"

"Why?" asked the pupils.

"You have a surprise exam!" he said.

The pupils grumbled as they complied, but one not-so-bright, large-bodied student who was a known troublemaker shouted, "Teacher, we don't want an exam now! I cannot even answer exam questions after revising, so what about when we have not revised at all?" The pupil said this in a very fierce tone and the teacher was furious.

He said, "Things don't happen here just as you please! You must sit the exam! Do you understand? If you don't like it, then get out of the classroom!"

The pupil replied back in rage, "Rather, you get up and leave!"

The teacher turned to the pupil, walked up to him and began to curse him, "You have no manners! No etiquettes!"

The pupil stood up and some things occurred which I would rather not mention, but can be guessed. The matter reached the school administration. The pupil was punished by having his final marks decreased and was forced to pledge that he would never again misbehave.

As for the teacher, everyone at that school began speaking about him. He could not walk down a corridor without hearing people whispering something about him, until he was compelled to leave and join another school.

Now, another school teacher once faced the same dilemma, but he dealt with it appropriately. One day, he entered his classroom and surprised the pupils by saying, "Please, take out your pen and paper. You have a surprise exam!"

One pupil, like the one mentioned previously, screamed, "Teacher! You cannot give us an exam whenever you feel like it!"

The teacher was like a mountain that could feel the insignificant weight of the person trying to climb him. He knew that a stubborn person should not be responded to with yet more stubbornness. He smiled and looked at the pupil then said, "So, Khalid, you do not want to sit the exam?"

The pupil screamed, 'No!'

The teacher said very calmly, "OK. Whoever does not wish to sit the exam will have to face the school's disciplinary procedure.

So, write the questions down. Question number one: Solve the following equation..."

The teacher began to list the questions, but the pupil could not remain silent and said, "I told you, I don't want to sit this exam!"

The teacher looked at the pupil with a smile and said, "Am I forcing you to sit an exam? You are an adult and responsible for your own actions."

The pupil found that he could not make this teacher angry, so he calmed down, took out a pen and paper, and began to write down the questions.

Afterwards, he was disciplined by the school administration for misbehaviour.

When I reflected upon this story, I realised the difference in people's ability to deal with diverse situations, and their expertise in either solving a problem or making it worse. Dealing with a stubborn person by using stubbornness only results in fireworks. Everyone would agree that fighting a fire with fire would only increase the flames, and that responding to coldness with coldness would not work either. Therefore, one's relationship with others should be like the hair strand of Mu'awiyah…

Mu'awiyah was once asked, "How did you manage to be a governor for twenty years and then a Caliph for twenty years?"

He replied, "I placed a hair strand between myself and the people. I would hold it from one end and they would hold it from the other. If they pulled it from their end, I would loosen it from mine so that the hair strand would not break. If they loosened it

from their end, I would pull on it from mine."

May Allah have mercy on him, how wise he was!

We can all agree that if both partners of a couple are stubborn, then they could never live together in happiness. Similarly, two stubborn people can never be friends for long.

I recall giving a lecture once in a prison. It happened that the lecture was to be delivered to a special section of the prison where most of the prisoners were guilty of murder or manslaughter. When I finished my lecture and the prisoners went back to their cells, one of them came forward to me to thank me. I realised that he was the one responsible for cultural activities in the prison. I asked him about the cause which led most of these men to commit murder.

He replied, "Just anger. By Allah, dear Shaykh, some of them have killed over a few riyals during a dispute with a shopkeeper or a petrol station attendant!"

Thereupon, I remembered the words of the Prophet ﷺ, "A strong person is not the one who throws his adversaries to the ground. Rather, a strong person is he who contains himself when angry." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Yes! The hero isn't the one with a strong body who overpowers anyone he wrestles with, for if this was the yardstick of heroism, then surely the animals would have been nobler than men. Rather, the hero is the intelligent one who knows how to skilfully deal with diverse situations. The hero is the one who tactfully deals with his wife, children, manager, and colleagues without losing them.

A Hadeeth states, "A judge should not give judgement whilst he is angry." (Abu Dawud and at-Tirmidhi who said it is Hasan Sahih)

The Prophet ﷺ ordered us to train ourselves on forbearance; he said, "Patience comes with forbearance." (ad-Daruqutni, Hasan)

The meaning of this is that the first time one suppresses his anger, it may drain his emotions 100%. The second time, it will decrease to 90%. The third time, it will be 80%, and so on until forbearance becomes second nature.

An incident related to anger is when I once went to the city of Amlaj, which is 300 km to the south of Jeddah, in order to deliver a lecture. Among the audience was a young man who would very easily become angry. This young man was once driving his car on the road at a normal speed, as he was in no hurry. Behind him was another car whose driver seemed to be in a rush and was trying to overtake him. Seeing this, the young man slowed down even more and gestured at the car behind to slow down.

The driver of the car that was following could hold his patience no longer. He put his foot on the accelerator swerved close to the one's car, and dangerously overtook, but nobody was hurt. The young man became furious, he was the type who would get angry over much less than this, and put his foot on the accelerator to catch up with the car that had overtaken him. He began to shout and gesture at the car so that its driver would stop, which he did. He then placed his headscarf on the passenger seat, grabbed a spanner, and got out of the car. He was visibly fuming as he walked towards the car. Suddenly, he saw three

muscular men jump out of the other car and run towards him. They had seen him with the spanner in his hand and realised he wanted to fight. When he saw them running towards him he was terrified, and when he realised they had noticed the spanner in his hand, he slowly raised it and said, "I apologise. I just wanted to let you know that this spanner dropped out of your car!"

One of the men took the spanner and the three men returned to their car as the young man waved goodbye!

Equation...

Ill temper + Ill temper = Fireworks!

(22)

The keys to hearts

Every door has a key. The key to open people's hearts is to know their personalities, solve their problems, reconcile between them, benefit from their good and keep safe from their evil. One will become an expert in all these skills if he knows their personalities.

Suppose an argument took place between a father and son due to which the father ordered the son to leave the house. The son then tried to return but the father persistently refused. You then get involved in order to reconcile between the two and remind the father of the religious texts pertaining to this issue and warn him about the sin of breaking the ties of kinship. However, he does not accept your advice, so you decide to use a different approach. You know that he has a very emotional personality and therefore go to him and say, "Won't you have mercy on your son? He sleeps on the floor without any roof to cover him. You eat and drink whist he remains hungry and thirsty. Do you not think of him each time you raise a morsel of food to put into your mouth? Do you not think about how he has to walk in the heat of the sun? Do you remember when he was small how you would hug and kiss him? Do you not think for a second that he might be living on handouts whilst his father is alive?"

You would find that the father will be moved by these words and come closer to considering reconciliation.

If his father was miserly, you could say to him, "Be careful and do not entangle yourself in further problems. Bring your son back so that he is under your supervision. You never know, he may steal or harm someone, due to which the court may order you to pay for the damage. You are, after all, his father, so be careful!"

You would find that the miser would reconsider due to his fear of loss of finances!

If you were speaking to the son and he loved wealth, you could say, "You need your father. Tomorrow, you would want to get married. Who would pay for the dowry? If your car breaks down, who will pay to get it fixed? If you fall ill, who will pay your medical fees? Your brothers are no doubt taking advantage of the situation as they are receiving their stipends and gifts whilst you sit here with nothing. Surely, you can change your situation by kissing your father on his forehead or saying sorry to him?"

Similarly, if you were called to reconcile between a husband and wife, you could do the same and open up their hearts towards each other by using the appropriate skills. Likewise, if you wanted leave from work and knew that your boss does not give much consideration to emotional or social factors and his only concern is work, you might say to him, "I need a break for about three days in order to regain strength and vigour. I feel that the enormous workload has resulted in me being temporarily inefficient. Please allow me to rest my head for three days so I may return to work invigorated." If he is someone who has consid-

eration for social factors, you may realise that he gives great importance to family matters. You could therefore say to him, "I need a vacation to visit my father and children. I have been feeling distant from them for a while."

Perfect these skills and very soon you will hear people saying about you, "We have not seen anyone as skilful as this person in convincing others."

The result...

Every man has a key to his heart, and knowing his personality assists in identifying the right key to open it.

(23)

Taking one's psychological condition into consideration

People's moods and circumstances fluctuate between sadness and happiness, health and illness, affluence and poverty, and stability and instability. Subsequently, their reaction to the way they are dealt with also changes depending on their psychological state at the time. A person may appreciate a joke when he is stable and relaxed, but not when he is upset. It would thus be very inappropriate to make a joke when visiting someone who was bereaved. But the same joke would be acceptable if said whilst out on a picnic. This is something all people understand and needs no further explanation. However, what does need to be clarified further is that one must take into consideration a person's psychological state, emotions and personality when speaking to or dealing with him.

Imagine a woman who has just been divorced by her husband and whose mother and father have passed away. She collects her belongings and prepares to move in with her brother and his wife. In the middle of her preparation, her neighbour comes to visit her. As the neighbour thinks of something to discuss, the divorced woman says, "I saw you yesterday outside your house."

The neighbour says, "Yes, my husband insisted on taking me out for dinner, so I went. Afterwards, we went to a shop where

he bought me a skirt to wear at my sister's wedding. We then went to the jewellers where he bought me a necklace to wear along with the skirt at the wedding. When we returned home, he noticed that the kids were bored, so he promised to take them out on the weekend."

As the poor divorced woman listens to all this, she reflects upon what her predicament will be when she leaves for her brother's house. The question is, is it appropriate to discuss something of this nature when the woman has just come out of a failed marriage? Would this woman's love for her neighbour increase due to this? Would she ever wish to sit with her ever again? I think we can all agree that the answer is a resounding 'No!'

Rather, her heart would be filled with jealousy and envy. What then is the solution? Should her neighbour have lied to her? Of course not, but she could have spoken tactfully and in brief. She could have said, "We had some things to do, so we went out", and then she should have changed the topic and tried to ease the pain of her neighbour.

Suppose two friends sit their secondary school examinations and one of them passes with flying colours whilst the other one fails in some subjects and therefore does not achieve the grades required for university. Would it be appropriate for the one who has passed to visit his friend and discuss the university that has accepted him and the various opportunities that have opened up? No doubt we would all say no. What then should he do? He should mention general matters that might lighten his worry. He could complain about the large number of applicants

to universities, how many people are not accepted, and all the other things that might make his friend feel better. Thereafter, his friend would probably not mind sitting with him and remaining his companion.

The same can be said about two young men who meet each other, one of whom has a generous father who is always showering him with wealth, while the other has a miserly father who hardly meets his needs. It would not be appropriate for the son of the generous father to speak about the generosity of his father and how he loves to spend on him, because this would distress his friend and cause him to remember his bad fortune with his father. Subsequently, he would not like to be in his company as he would feel that he is insensitive.

For this reason, the Prophet ﷺ emphasised that people's psychological conditions and sensitivities be considered. He said, "Do not stare at a leper." (Ibn Majah, Sahih) A leper is not attractive to look at and hence, it is inappropriate that if he passes by a group of people that they should stare at him, for this would remind him of his affliction and hurt him further.

One occasion which beautifully demonstrates the Prophet's consideration for people's sensitivities is the way he dealt with Abu Bakr's father when heading to the conquest of Makkah with the Muslim army. Abu Bakr's father, Abu Quhafah, was a blind old man. He said to his granddaughter, "Dear daughter, take me to Mount Abu Qays so I can see for myself the truth of what they are saying, and whether Muhammad really is approaching or not."

She took him to the mountain and then he said, "Tell me,

what you see."

She said, "I see blackness approaching us."

He said, "Those are the horses."

She said, "I see a man going back and forth in front of that blackness."

He said, "He is the man responsible for leading the horses." She said, "The blackness has now spread."

He said, "By Allah, this means that the horses have nearly approached Makkah. Take me to my house quickly for they have said that whoever shuts himself in his house is safe!"

The girl brought him down the mountain, but they were intercepted by Muslim horsemen before they could reach home. Abu Bakr went to his father and greeted him. Then he took him by his hand to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in the mosque. When the Prophet ﷺ saw him, he found him to be an old man whose body had weakened and bones had softened and who was close to death. Abu Bakr looked at his father, who he now saw after a long period of separation, for he had been apart from his father in the service of his religion.

The Prophet ﷺ said to Abu Bakr out of kindness, "Why didn't you leave your old father at home so I could come to see him instead?"

Abu Bakr knew that they were in the middle of a war where the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was their leader. He also knew that the Prophet ﷺ had very little time and too much to accomplish to visit the old man's house and ask him to accept Islam. Hence, Abu Bakr thanked the Prophet ﷺ and said, "O Messenger of Al-

lah, it is more appropriate that he comes to you than for you to go to him."

The Prophet ﷺ sat Abu Quhafah down in front of him very kindly, placed his hand on his chest and said, "Accept Islam."

Abu Quhafah's face illuminated, and he said, "I testify that there is no one worthy of worship but Allah and that Muhammad is His servant and messenger", and Abu Bakr rejoiced as he had never done before. The Prophet ﷺ gazed at the old man's face and noticed that his hair had turned grey, so he said, "Dye his hair, but do not use black."

Yes, he would take psychology into consideration when dealing with others. In fact, when he entered Makkah, he had divided the army into battalions and had given the banner of one of the battalions to the heroic Companion Sa'd bin 'Ubadah – may Allah be pleased with him. It was considered very noble to carry the banner, not just for the carrier but also for his people. As Sa'd was looking at Makkah and its residents, he reflected upon how they had fought against the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, put him under unbearable strain, turned people away from him, murdered Sumayyah and Yasir, and tortured Bilal and Khabbab. He thought that they surely deserved to be taught a lesson! Sa'd waved his banner and said, "Today is the day of slaughter! Today your inviolabilities will be attacked!"

This was unbearable for Quraysh. They feared that he might exterminate them all. Hence, a woman stepped forward and complained to the Prophet ﷺ about Sa'd in words of poetry, begging him to prevent Sa'd from shedding anyone's blood.

When Allah's Messenger ﷺ heard her poetic words, he was

moved and felt pity. He didn't want to disappoint her, just as he didn't want to anger Sa'd by taking away the banner from him after having honoured him therewith. He therefore ordered Sa'd to hand over the banner to his son, Qays bin Sa'd, whom Sa'd was riding alongside, as they entered Makkah. Hence, the woman from Quraysh was happy when she saw that Sa'd was no longer carrying the banner, and likewise, Sa'd was not angered since he remained the leader of the battalion, except that he had spared himself the burden of carrying the banner and had thus given it to his son to carry instead.

How wonderful it is to kill two birds with one stone!

Try not to lose anyone. Try to successfully win over everyone - even if there is conflict of interest between them.

Harmony...

We deal with hearts not bodies.

(24)

Be concerned about others

People usually like to be valued. This is why one sees individuals at times acting in a certain manner in order to attract attention. They may even invent tales or stories of their valour so that people may show them concern or be amazed by them.

Imagine a person who returns home from work tired. He enters his living room and finds his four children sitting alone. The oldest of them is eleven-years old and is watching a television program. The second is having his dinner. The third is playing with his toys, and the fourth is doing his homework. The father then greets them in a loud voice: "as-Salaamu 'alaykum!" One of the children is lost in his television program, the second is completely enchanted by his toys and the third is busy with his dinner. As for the fourth, when he turns around and sees his father, he drops his books and rushes in delight to welcome him, kisses his hand, and then returns to his books.

Which of the four children would be the most beloved to the father?

I say with certainty that our response would be the same: the most beloved of them would of course be the fourth; not because he is the most beautiful or the most intelligent, but only

because he showed his father that he valued him. Hence, the more one cares for others, the greater their love and respect will be for him.

The best of the creation ﷺ would consider these factors in people. He would make everyone feel that their problem was in fact his own problem, and that their worry was indeed his own. Once, when the Prophet ﷺ stood on his pulpit to address the people, a man entered the mosque. He looked at the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said: "O Messenger of Allah!", and then began to ask him about his religion, for he knew little about it.

The Prophet ﷺ turned to him and noticed that he was a Bedouin who might not have been able to wait for the sermon to finish in order to obtain an answer. He feared that the man may have even left the mosque and never returned.

The issue was of utmost importance to the man, to such an extent that he had interrupted the sermon in order to ask him about religious rulings! The Prophet ﷺ was thinking from the perspective of others and not his own. Thus, he (ﷺ) descended from his noble pulpit and called for a chair to be brought. He (ﷺ) sat in front of the man and began teaching and explaining religious rulings to him until he understood. He then stood up and returned to his pulpit to finish his sermon. How great he was! How persevering he was!

Since he also cultivated the Companions in his school, they would also show concern for others, be welcoming towards them, and share with them in their moments of happiness and grief.

An example of this is how Talhah dealt with Ka'b – may Al-

lah be pleased with them both. Ka'b bin Malik – may Allah be pleased with him – was an old man. Let us sit with him after he has grown old, his bones have weakened, and he has become blind, as he relates to us the memories of his youth, when he lagged behind in the expedition of Tabuk, the last expedition the Prophet ﷺ participated in...

The Prophet ﷺ called the people to set off for Tabuk and prepare for an expedition. He collected people's contributions to prepare an army, until the number of combatants reached 30,000 - this was in a season when the shade was pleasant and the fruits had ripened, yet the desert heat was severe. The journey was long and the enemy was mighty and haughty. The Muslims were great in number but some of their names were not listed in the register.

Ka'b said, "I was the wealthiest I had ever been at the time. I had managed to accumulate two rides, and I found myself the strongest that I had ever been. At that time, I inclined towards the shade and the sweetness of fruits, and remained so until the Messenger of Allah ﷺ set off to leave.

So I said to myself: 'I will go tomorrow to the marketplace, buy something in preparation for the expedition, and join them later.' I then went to the marketplace the next day, but some things came up and so I returned. Thus I said: 'I will return tomorrow – Allah willing, buy something and then join them', but then again, some thing delayed me. I then said: 'I will return again tomorrow – Allah willing'… This kept happening until days went by and I was left behind by the Messenger of Allah – may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him. I then began strolling the mar-

ketplaces and walking around the city, only to find people who were either drowning in hypocrisy, or those whom Allah had excused from marching forth.'

Yes, Ka'b was left behind in Madinah.

As for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, he along with his 30,000 companions marched forth until they reached Tabuk; he ﷺ looked at the faces of his Companions to find that he was missing a righteous person from amongst those who had witnessed the Pledge of 'Aqabah. He therefore asked, "What happened to Ka'b bin Malik?" A man replied: "O Allah's Messenger! He has been prevented by his two Burdas (cloaks) and his looking at his own flanks with pride." To this Mu'adh bin Jabal replied: "How evil is what you have said! By Allah, O Messenger of Allah! I have not known except good from him." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ remained silent.

Ka'b continued: "When the Prophet ﷺ finished with the expedition of Tabuk and made his way back to Madinah, I began to think; 'How do I save myself from his displeasure?' I would seek advice from whoever had to offer me advice from my family, until the Prophet ﷺ finally arrived in Madinah, and I realised that I would not be saved except by being honest."

The Prophet ﷺ then reached Madinah and directly entered the mosque, wherein he prayed two units of prayer, and then sat with the people. There came to him those who had lagged behind, making excuses for their actions and swearing oaths. They were about eighty-odd people. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ accepted their excuses at face value and sought forgiveness for them, leaving their innermost secrets to Allah.

Ka‘b bin Malik also came. When he greeted him, the Prophet ﷺ looked at him. He smiled at him, the smile of one who is angry. Ka’b walked towards him and sat in front of him. The Prophet ﷺ said to him: “What made you lag behind? Did you not buy a ride for yourself?” Meaning: your riding beast. He replied: ‘Indeed, I did!’ The Prophet ﷺ asked: “Then, what kept you behind?” Ka‘b said: “O Messenger of Allah, if I were to have sat in front of anyone in the world other than you, I would have saved myself from his anger by making an excuse. I have been given the power of persuasion. But by Allah, I know that if I were to tell you a lie today in order to attain your pleasure, then Allah would soon make you angry with me anyway, and if I were to speak the truth, then surely you would be upset with me, but I would hope that because I spoke the truth, Allah would forgive me. O Messenger of Allah, by Allah, I do not have any excuse. By Allah, I had never been stronger nor wealthier than I was when I remained behind!”

Ka‘b remained silent. Thereupon, the Prophet ﷺ turned to his Companions and said: “He has indeed spoken the truth. Get up (O Ka‘b) and wait until Allah decides your case.” Ka‘b got up and left the mosque, dragging his feet, feeling remorse and being grief stricken, not knowing what Allah would decide for him.

When the people saw this, a group from amongst them followed him and began to censure him. They said: “By Allah! We have not known you to have committed a sin before this. Though, you are a poet, you failed to make excuses to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ like the rest of those who lagged behind! You could have made an excuse by which he would have been pleased with you and sought forgiveness for you, so that Allah may have forgiven

you.'

Ka'b said: "They continued to censure me so much that I considered returning to the Prophet ﷺ to inform him that I had lied. But I then asked: 'Is there anyone else who has had the same experience?' Someone replied: 'Yes. Two men also said what you said and were told what you were told.' I asked: 'Who are they?' They said: 'Murarah bin al-Rabi' and Hilal bin Umayyah.' These were two righteous men who had witnessed the battle of Badr – men whom I thought could be examples for me. I therefore said: 'By Allah, I will never return to the Prophet to retract what I have said and belie myself!"

Thus Ka'b walked along, broken inside and full of sadness, until he reached home, where he remained. Not much time had passed after this when the Prophet ﷺ forbade the people from speaking to Ka'b and his two Companions.

Ka'b said: "After this, people completely changed their attitude towards us and would shun us. If I were to go out to the marketplace, no one would speak to me. The people became estranged from me as if I never knew them. It was as though even the walls had become estranged from us, as if these weren't the walls we were familiar with and the earth that we knew had also become a stranger. The two companions of mine would sit in their homes and weep night and day. They would never show their faces. They would busy themselves with worship as if they were monks. As for me, then I was the youngest and the firmest of the three. I would go out and attend the prayers with the Muslims and roam around the marketplaces, yet, nobody would speak to me.

"I would enter the mosque and approach the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and greet him, then be left wondering to myself if he even moved his lips to return my greeting or not. I would pray close to him, looking at him stealthily. When I became busy with prayer, he would turn to me. When I turned to him, he would turn away from me."

Days went by and pain led to more pain. Ka'b was once considered a noble man amongst his people and a leading poet. He was known amongst kings and princes. His poetry circulated amongst the great so much that they would long to meet him. Yet here he was in Madinah amongst his own people, and no one would speak to or even look at him, so much so that the tragedy was gruelling and the estrangement became almost impossible to bear. Still, there was to come to him another test…

One day, as he was roaming around the marketplace, there came a Christian from Syria. He said: "Who can take me to Ka'b bin Malik?" The people pointed to Ka'b, so he came to him and gave him a letter from the King of Ghassan. How strange! From the King of Ghassan! Therefore, his news must have reached Syria, so much so that the King of the Ghassanites showed concern for him! How amazing! What exactly did the King want from him?

Ka'b opened up the letter and read: "To proceed: O Ka'b bin Malik! It has reached me that your companion has turned cold towards you and distanced you from him. You do not deserve loss or ruin, or to be disgraced. So join us, and we would give you consolation."

When he finished reading the letter, he said: "To Allah we

belong! The people of disbelief have now shown interest in me! This is indeed a great calamity and evil!" He then went with the letter immediately to an oven, set it alight, and burned it. Ka‘b did not consider the king's offer for a moment.

Yes, the doors were opened up to him to the kings' palaces and the mansions of the great who would invite him to honour and companionship, whilst the city of Madinah around him censured him and people frowned in his face. He would greet people, yet none would return his greeting. He would ask, yet none would respond. Despite that, he did not turn to the disbelievers. The devil failed to shake him or to make him a slave to his desires. He simply tossed the letter into the fire and let it burn.

Thus the days passed, one by one, until a whole month went by. Ka‘b remained in this state as the boycott continued to grow heavier around his neck and the pressure continued to increase. Neither did the Messenger ﷺ pardon him, nor did revelation descend decreeing anything in this matter.

When forty days had passed, a messenger from the Prophet ﷺ came to Ka‘b, knocking on his door. Ka‘b went out to him, hoping that he might have come with concessions, only to find the messenger saying: "The Messenger orders that you distance yourself from your wife." He said: "Should I divorce her?" He said: "No, but keep your distance from her and do not approach her." Thereupon, Ka‘b went to his wife and said: "Go back to your family and stay with them until Allah decrees for this matter."

The Prophet ﷺ sent the same message to his two companions. So the wife of Hilal bin Umayyah came to him and said: "O Messenger of Allah, Hilal bin Umayyah is a weak old man. Will

you give me permission to serve him?" He replied: "Yes, but do not let him approach you." The woman said: "O Prophet of Allah, he is not even able to move for anything he needs. He is still very depressed and cries, night and day, since the day he did what he did."

The days became very difficult for Ka'b and the boycott became so unbearable for him that he began to re-examine his faith. He would try to speak to the Muslims, but they would not respond to him. He would greet the Messenger of Allah ﷺ but would not hear a response. So where should he have gone? Whom should he have consulted?

Ka'b said: "When the calamity had gone on for far too long, I went to Abu Qatadah, who was my cousin and the most beloved of people to me. I found him in his garden. I scaled the wall, entered and greeted him, but by Allah, he did not return my greeting. I said: 'I beseech you, by Allah, O Abu Qatadah, do you know that I love Allah and His Messenger?' He remained silent. I then said: 'O Abu Qatadah, do you know that I love Allah and His Messenger?' He remained silent. I then said: 'I beseech you, by Allah, O Abu Qatadah, do you know that I love Allah and His Messenger?' He then said: 'Allah and His Messenger know best."

When Ka'b heard this response from his cousin and the dearest of all people to him, it was as if he could no longer tell if he was a believer or not. He could not bear what he had heard. His eyes filled with tears. He climbed over the wall, went back to his house and remained therein, looking here and there, confined within the walls of his house. He had no wife to accompany him, nor a relative to console him.

Fifty nights had passed since the Prophet ﷺ forbade the people to speak to them. On the fiftieth night, it was revealed to the Prophet in the last third of the night that the repentance of the three men had been accepted. At the time, the Prophet ﷺ was in the house of Umm Salamah. So he recited the relevant verses, after which Umm Salamah said: "O Prophet of Allah, shall we not give the glad tidings to Ka'b bin Malik?" He replied: "The people would throng and prevent you from sleeping for the rest of the night!"

Hence, when the Prophet ﷺ prayed the Fajr prayer, he proclaimed the fact that Allah had accepted their repentance. The people then rushed to give them the glad tidings.

Ka'b said: "I had prayed Fajr on the rooftop of one of our houses. I was sitting in a state which Allah has described in His Book, in which my soul felt intense restriction, and even the earth had become restricted, despite its vastness, and nothing worried me more than the thought that I may die and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ may not pray over me, or that he may die whilst I remain boycotted by the people, such that no one speaks to me ever, nor prays over me upon my death.

"So, whilst I was in that state, I heard the voice of a person on Mount Sala', shouting at the top of his voice: 'O Ka'b bin Malik! Glad tidings for you!' I fell into prostration and realised that relief had at last arrived from Allah. There came to me a man on a horse, whilst another man was shouting from the top of the mountain, and his voice reached me more swiftly than the horse.

"When the man whose voice I heard finally came to me to

give me the good news, I took off my two garments and gave them to the men. By Allah, I didn't have any other garments, so I borrowed two others, wore them and set out to see the Messenger of Allah – may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him. The people came to meet me in droves, congratulating me on the acceptance of my repentance, saying: 'Congratulations that your repentance has been accepted!' I entered the mosque and found the Messenger of Allah ﷺ sitting with his Companions.

"When they all saw me, by Allah, none stood for me except Talhah bin Ubaydullah. He stood up, hugged and congratulated me, then sat down again. By Allah, I will never forget Talhah's action! I kept on walking until I reached the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and greeted him. I noticed that his face was radiant with happiness. Whenever he became happy, his face would become radiant, as if it were part of the moon. When he saw me, he said: 'Glad tidings to you for the best day you have witnessed since your mother gave birth to you!' I said: 'Is this favour from you, or Allah?' He replied: 'It is from Allah.' Then he recited the verses. I sat down in front of him and said: 'O Messenger of Allah! As part of my repentance, I should give the sum total of my wealth in charity for Allah and His Messenger.' He said in response: 'Keep some of your wealth, for that is better for you.' I said: 'O Messenger of Allah, Allah only saved me for being truthful, and a part of my repentance should be to always speak the truth as long as I live.'"

Yes, Allah accepted the repentance of Ka'b and his two companions and revealed in that regard Qura'nic passages, saying:

"Allah has already forgiven the Prophet and the Muhajirin

and the Ansaar who followed him in the hour of difficulty after the hearts of a party of them had almost inclined [to doubt], and then He forgave them. Indeed, He was to them Kind and Merciful. And [He also forgave] the three who were left behind [and regretted their error] to the point that the earth closed in on them in spite of its vastness and their souls confined [i.e., anguished] them and they were certain that there is no refuge from Allah except in Him. Then He turned to them so they could repent. Indeed, Allah is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful."

The point to note in this story is that Talhah – may Allah be pleased with him – when he saw Ka'b, he stood up for him, hugged and congratulated him. Hence, Ka'b's admiration increased for him, so much so that he would say after Talhah's death, whilst narrating this story years later: "By Allah! I will never forget what Talhah did!"

And what did Talhah do to captivate the heart of Ka'b? He demonstrated a great skill, by showing concern for him and sharing in his moment of happiness with him, and hence he became beloved to Ka'b.

Being compassionate and sympathising with people captivates their hearts. If one was in the midst of his exams and received a text message saying: "Give me some good news about your exams. By Allah, I am concerned about you and praying for you. Your friend, Ibrahim." - Would this not increase his admiration for the friend? No doubt, it would.

If one's father was ill in hospital, and he was to remain with him in his room, distressed and preoccupied with concern, and his friend were to phone him, asking after the father, saying: "Do

you need any help? I am always there if you need me," he would certainly thank him. Then, if he were to call in the evening again, saying: "Does your family need anything that I can buy for them? Please let me know," he would have thanked him and prayed for him. Do you not think that his heart would be endeared towards him further? Compare that to a friend who calls, saying: 'Hello! We are going off to the beach to have fun. What do you say? Do you want to come with us?" he would reply: 'Well, my father is ill, so I cannot.' Then, instead of praying for the father and apologising for not asking about his condition, if the friend were to say, "I know that, but he is in the hospital and he has nurses to look after him. He won't benefit much from your presence, anyway. Come with us, enjoy yourself and swim, etc." If he said this while laughing and joking, as if he is unconcerned about the father's illness, what would one's view of the friend be then? No doubt, his status in his heart would decrease as he simply did not display any concern whatsoever about his worries.

One of the most upsetting things ever to happen to me was when I was once in Jeddah for a few days. I was extremely busy at the time and meanwhile, I received a text message from my brother Su'ud which read: "May Allah grant you befitting patience. Your cousin has passed away in Germany."

I called my brother who told me that this cousin of ours, who was elderly, had travelled just two days before that to Germany for heart treatment and had died during the operation. His body was soon to arrive at Riyadh airport. I prayed for him and sought Allah's mercy for him, and ended the call with my brother. A couple of days later, my work in Jeddah was complete, and so I went to the airport, waiting for my flight to depart for Riyadh.

There, a group of young men passed by me. When they saw me, they recognised me and greeted me. Some of them were adolescents with outlandish hairstyles, but I nevertheless joked with them and affectionately teased them.

I became busy with a telephone call and after I finished, I saw a young man wearing trousers and a shirt. When he saw me, he greeted me and shook my hand. I welcomed him and said, jokingly: "What is this fashion? It is as if today is your wedding day!" or words to that effect.

The young man remained silent for a while and then said: "I think you haven't it recognised me. I am so-and-so. I have just arrived from Germany with my father's body and I am flying off to Riyadh on the next available flight."

I felt as if someone had poured a barrel of cold water over me. I was extremely embarrassed. His father had passed away, whose body happened to be with him in the plane, and yet here I was, joking with him and laughing. This was extremely awkward, indeed!

I remained silent for a second, before replying: "I am so sorry! By Allah, I did not realise it was you! I've been here for a few days, you see. May Allah grant you befitting patience and may he forgive your father."

This was despite the fact that I had an excuse in not realising who he was, as I used to see him very infrequently and on those occasions he would be in his traditional dress and headscarf.

Therefore, because he wore trousers and surprised me, amongst a crowd of young men in Jeddah, I did not think that he was the person in question.

Part of having concern for others is to share in their feelings and to show them that their worries are your worries, and that you love good for them.

For this reason, one would find that professional companies always have a Public Relations department, whose role is to send seasonal greetings, gifts, and so on. Whenever one shows people that they are valued and cared for, he captures their hearts and they then love him.

Here is a real-life example of this: If a person were to enter a place full of people and could not find a place to sit, and one was to move a little and offer him some space saying: "Please come here and have a seat", he would recognise his concern for him and this would endear him to him. Or, if one was at a dinner party and you noticed him holding his plate, looking for a table with empty space, and he therefore vacated a seat for him, saying: "Welcome! Please have a seat here," he would have noticed the concern for him. Therefore, if one shows people that he values them, they would love him.

The Prophet ﷺ would give utmost importance to this. Look at when he was delivering a sermon once on his pulpit one Friday, and suddenly a Bedouin entered the mosque, walked through the rows, looked at the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said in a loud voice: "O Messenger of Allah, I am a person who does not know what his religion is. Teach me what my religion is!"

The Prophet ﷺ descended from his pulpit and turned to the man. He asked for a chair, then sat on it, and then began to speak to the man and explain to him his religion until he understood. He then returned to the pulpit.

This is a demonstration of having the utmost care for people. Who knows, if he had ignored him, the man may have remained ignorant with regards to his religion until he died.

If we were to learn about his character, we would find that when he would shake someone's hand, he wouldn't withdraw his hand until the other person withdrew his hand first. If a person were to speak to him, he would completely turn towards him, meaning that he would turn his face and body towards him, in order to listen with full attention.

Experience…

…tells us that whenever you show people that you value and care for them, you capture their hearts and are thus endeared to them.

(25)

Show them that you want the best for them

Whenever your heart becomes filled with love and sincerity towards others, you naturally become earnest in your skills in dealing with them; people begin to feel your love for them, and in turn, they too begin to increase in their love and acceptance of you.

A female doctor's private clinic was always full of patients. The patients always wanted to visit her as each of them felt that she was their personal friend. This female doctor would employ various skills that would spellbind people's hearts.

One of those skills was that she agreed with her secretary that if any of the patients ever called, wanting to speak to the doctor or to ask her something about an illness, the secretary would welcome her, ask her name, then kindly request her to call back after five minutes.

The secretary would then open up her health record and hand it over to the doctor. The doctor would read all the information about the patient, look into the record, and become acquainted with all her information, including her work, and even her children's names. Then, when the patient would call back, she would welcome her and enquire about her illness, about her

youngest child, and general news about her work, etc. The patient would then feel that this doctor really liked her to such an extent that she even remembered the names of her children as well as the illness she is suffering from. The doctor did even not forget where she worked! Not surprisingly, this patient would be inclined to visit this particular doctor each time she needed medical advice. See how easy it is to win and captivate hearts?

There is nothing wrong in expressing your love for others frankly, be the person a father, mother, wife, child, colleague or neighbour. Do not hide your feelings towards them. Proclaim your love to them by saying, "I love you", "You are very precious to me", etc. Even if this person happens to be an open sinner, you could say to him, "You are more beloved to me than many others!" And you wouldn't have lied, since surely they are more beloved to you than millions of diselievers, isn't that so? Be smart!

I remember once I went to perform 'Umrah. I was in the middle of performing Tawaaf and Sa'ee, praying for all the Muslims generally, that they be protected and granted victory and dominion. I also probably said something like, "O Allah, forgive me, my beloved ones and my friends." After finishing the rituals of 'Umrah, I praised Allah for making it easy for me.

I then rented out a room in a hotel to spend a night therein. As I rested my head on the pillow, I wrote a text message on my mobile phone saying, "Just now, I have finished my 'Umrah and remembered my beloved ones. And because you are one of them, I did not forget you in my supplications. May Allah protect you and give you all ability" – End of message.

I sent this to all the names stored in my telephone memory,

that is, about five hundred people. I couldn't even imagine the amazing effect it would have on people's hearts. Someone replied saying, "By Allah, I cried as I read your message. Thank you for remembering me in your supplication." Another wrote, "By Allah, dear Abu Abd al-Rahman, I do not know what to say in reply. But, may Allah reward you with good." Yet another replied, "I ask Allah to accept your prayers. By Allah, we will never forget you."

In reality, we do need to occasionally remind people that we love them, and that the numerous problems in the world have not made us forget them. This much can be done via something as simple as sending text messages. You can send text messages to your loved ones saying: "I prayed for you between the Adhan and Iqamah…", or "on the last hour of Friday". If your intention is pure, then this would not constitute making a display of good deeds or showing off. This would only result in greater love and respect between the Muslims.

I recall once giving a lecture at a summer camp in Ta'if, on ash-Shafa Mountain, which is a picnicking site where many young people gather. Most of the attendees there were young people who looked very righteous. Other youngsters also remained around the picnic sites, busy with entertainment and music. When the lecture ended, a group of young men came forward to greet me. Amongst them was a young man who had an odd hairstyle and was wearing tight jeans. He came up to me, shook my hand and greeted me. I warmly returned his greetings and thanked him for attending. I shook his hand and said, "You have the face of a preacher". He smiled and went away. Two weeks later, I was surprised by a phone call. The speaker said, "Do you not recognise me? I am the one to whom you said 'you have the

face of a preacher'. By Allah, I will become a preacher, if Allah wills." He then began to open up to me and explain to me his inner sentiments.

Do you see how people are affected by truthful expressions and love?

As for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, he would captivate people's hearts merely by the charm of his manners and his ability to demonstrate his true love for them. Abu Bakr ﷺ and 'Umar ﷺ were the best of the Companions. They would always compete with each other in good. Abu Bakr would mostly surpass 'Umar. If 'Umar were to be early for prayer, he would find that Abu Bakr had already preceded him. If he were to feed a poor person, he would find that Abu Bakr had already done the same before him. If he were to stay awake the night praying, he would find that Abu Bakr had surpassed him yet again.

Once, the Prophet ﷺ ordered the people to give charity, in order to alleviate a hardship the Muslims were facing. It happened that at the time 'Umar was very affluent, and so he decided, "Today, I will surpass Abu Bakr, if I am ever to surpass him at all." 'Umar then went and brought half of his wealth and gave it to the Messenger of Allah – may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him. What was the first thing the Prophet ﷺ said to 'Umar upon seeing this wealth? Did he ask him how much it was? Did he ask him about the type of gold and silver?

No. Rather, when he saw the amount of wealth, he said words from which 'Umar gathered that he was beloved to the Messenger of Allah – may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him. He said to 'Umar, "What did you leave behind for your fam-

ily, O 'Umar?"

'Umar said, "O Messenger of Allah, I have left behind its like for my family." 'Umar then sat next to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ enthusiastically waiting for Abu Bakr. Then came Abu Bakr with plenty of wealth, and gave it to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ whilst 'Umar remained standing in his place, watching Abu Bakr and listening to the discussion that took place thereafter. The Prophet ﷺ, before looking at his wealth to see what he might have required, asked Abu Bakr: "O Abu Bakr, what did you leave behind for your family?"

Yes, he loved Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه and loved his family, and therefore did not want him to suffer any hardship. Abu Bakr said in response: "O Messenger of Allah, I left for them Allah and His Messenger."

He came with all of his wealth. Not half, nor a quarter, but all! 'Umar then had no choice but to say, "This is no shock. I will never be able to surpass Abu Bakr!"

The people would love the Prophet ﷺ intensely as they felt that he loved them. The Prophet ﷺ once prayed with them, and shortened his prayer noticeably. After the prayers were finished, the Prophet ﷺ observed that his Companions were surprised. Thus, he said to them, "Perhaps, you are surprised that I shortened the prayer?"

They replied, "Yes."

He explained, "I heard a child cry, so I felt merciful towards the mother."

Did you notice how he loved others? His love for the people

clearly shined through in his treatment of them.

You are not alone

Display your emotions. Be frank, "I love you. I was delighted to see you. You are precious to me."

(26)

Remember names

This is also a way of showing concern for people. How great it is to meet a person on occasion, such as in a bank, or plane, or a wedding party, and then be acquainted with his name; thereafter, when you see him on a different occasion, you go up to him and say, "Hello, so-and-so!" Undoubtedly, this would implant in his heart love and respect for you.

For you to remember the name of the person in front of you shows him that you have concern for him. There is a difference between a teacher who remembers the names of his students and the one who does not. For you to say to a student, "Stand up, O so-and-so" is better than to say, "Stand up, O student!"

Even when responding to a telephone call, which is more beloved to you? For one to respond to you saying, "Yes" or "Hello"? Or for one to say, "Hello, dear Khalid!" or, "Hello Abu 'Abdullah!"? No doubt, the fact that you hear your name rings bells in your heart.

It has become a tradition that after I deliver general lectures, many youngsters come to me to shake my hand and to thank me. I am therefore always eager to repeat the phrase, "What is your name? Who am I speaking to?"

I say this to everyone I greet, to show that I care for him. Hence, everyone of them responds to me, saying, "I am your brother, Ziyad", or, "I am your son, Yasir" and so on.

I recall that once when just after a great number of youngsters greeted me and left, one of them came back to ask me a question. The first thing I said to him was, "May Allah prolong your life, O Khalid!" He rejoiced and said, "Praise be to Allah! You know my name!" People often like to be called by their names.

It is well known that all policemen wear name plates on their shirts. I recall that once I gave a lecture in a garrison town, and many policemen came to me to greet me after the lecture. I noticed that one of them kept going back and forth, as if he wanted to greet me, but was too shy to walk through the crowd around me. I turned to him, looked at the name plate he had on his chest, extended my hand to him and said, "Welcome, dear so-and-so." His face changed and he was amazed. He extended his hand to shake mine and, said with a smile on his face, "Wow! How did you know my name?" I said to him, "Dear brother, we must make an effort to know the names of those we love." This had a great effect on him. Many people feel a sense of satisfaction due to this, and wish that they also remember the names of others.

There are many reasons why some people cannot recall others' names. One of them is the lack of concern for people while meeting them. Another is that their minds are preoccupied whilst meeting and asking others' their names such that they are unable to focus when they mention their names. Another factor is their own attitude towards the person they are meeting.

Because you believe that you probably will not meet him

again, you deem it unnecessary to remember the name. Or if the person is very ordinary, and does not affect you enough to catch your attention. Sometimes, you do not get to hear the name properly, and feel embarrassed to ask him to repeat himself. These are some of the reasons people do not remember names.

There are several ways of curing this problem of not being able to remember names. One is to realise the importance of remembering people's names, and to feel that once you have heard their names, you would be asked to repeat them after a few minutes. Another way is to focus on a person's face while listening to his name. Try to make note of the person in front of you, how he talks and smiles, such that it leaves an impression in your memory. As you speak to him, refer to him by his name repeatedly, "…isn't that right, so-and-so?", "…did you hear that, so-and-so?", or "…do you follow me, so-and-so?" Repeat it more than once.

This is very important, for if you were to contemplate the Qur'an, you would find that Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, refers to His Prophets by their names:

"O Abraham! Turn away from them…"

"O Noah! He is not from your family"

"O David! We have made you a deputy on this earth"

In short

Show me that you have concern for me by remembering my name, and refer to me by it... and I would surely love you.

(27)

Be observant and complimentary

Many of the things we do in life are actually done for others and not for ourselves. When you are invited to a wedding party, you wear your best clothes. You do this in order to attract people's attention and to amaze them with your appearance, and not for your own sake.

You become happy when you notice that they admire your beautiful appearance, or your glamorous clothes. When you decorate your lounge, and put effort into adorning and taking care of it, you do it mostly for others' sight and not your own. This is evident by the fact that you look after your lounge more than your own room, or your children's room.

When you call your friends to dinner, don't you see that your wife, and perhaps, even you, make sure that the food is well arranged and is more varied than usual?

Undoubtedly, you do! The more important your friends are to you, the greater your concern about the food. How often are we overwhelmed with happiness when someone praises our clothes or the décor of our house, or the taste of our cooking? The Prophet ﷺ has said, "Let a man come to the people how he likes the people to come to him," meaning, treat the people how

you like to be treated by them. How?

If you see that your friend is wearing a beautiful garment, notice it and compliment his taste. Let him hear the resounding words in praise, "Praise be to Allah! How beautiful it is! It is as if today is your wedding day!" Similarly, if someone were to visit you one day and you smell nice perfume emanating from his clothes, you should praise him and indulge him, for he did not apply the perfume except for you. He would definitely appreciate your oft repeated encouraging phrases, praising him such as, "What a beautiful fragrance! You have excellent taste!"

If a person calls you over for dinner, praise his food, for you know that his mother, wife, or sister stood for hours in the kitchen just for you, or for the guests in general, and you happen to be one of them. Or at least, he may have made an effort to bring the food from a restaurant and confectioners. So let him hear the words that would make him realise that you appreciate his efforts, and that his labours did not go in vain.

If you were to enter the house of one of your friends and you were to see nice furniture, make sure to make a positive remark about the furniture and the great choice your friend possesses. (However, avoid over-praising, lest it begins to sound as if you are mocking him).

If you go to a general gathering and hear someone speaking to those present eloquently, thereby livening the atmosphere and delighting the audience, then praise him. Hold his hand when you get up. Say to him, "Masha Allah, what an amazing orator! Nothing illuminated the gathering except your presence!" The next time you find yourself in the company of such a person,

try this out with him and he is almost guaranteed to develop a liking for you.

If you witness a son being good to his father - for instance, he kisses his hand, or brings his shoes closer to him for his ease - praise the son and be compimentary. If you meet one wearing a new garment, praise him and be radiant. If you visit your sister and notice how she takes care of her children, praise her joyfully. If you see how your friend takes care of his children or how splendidly he welcomes his guests, be daring, compliment and praise him. Express the admiration you feel in your chest for his actions. If you sit in someone's car or rent a taxi and notice the cleanliness of the car, or the expertise of the driver, then be complimentary and praise him.

You may say, "These are all things that people normally do." True, but still, praising them over such things doesn't fail to affect them. I have tried it out myself and tested this skill on a number of people, young and old, ordinary workers and teachers. In fact, I have even tried it with people who work in high positions. I noticed how incredibly they were affected, especially concerning things where people expect others to comment on.

You see a groom a week after his wedding who has acquired a degree in higher education and just moved to a new house. No doubt he is expecting you to congratulate and compliment him. Be as people expect you to be – do not disappoint him.

'Abdul-Majid, my cousin, was a young man in secondary school. After he completed his secondary education, he asked me to come with him to apply to a university. I rang him one morning and drove to his house to take him with me there. At

the time, he had many feelings in his heart since he was moving on to the next stage in his education, and thinking about the college that would accept him as a student. When he entered my car, I smelt his perfume, which I thought was very strong. It seemed as though he had emptied out an entire bottle on himself that day! Frankly, I choked on the scent so I wound down the window to be able to breathe. I then realised that the poor boy had put a lot of effort in adorning himself and applying perfume. So I turned to him smiling and said, "MashaAllah! What an amazing scent! I think that the Head of Department, by merely smelling the sweet scent, would shout at the top of his voice, 'You have been accepted!' "

You cannot imagine the extent to which happiness engulfed his heart and joy enveloped his face. He turned to me and said with all zeal, "Thank you, dear Abu Abd al-Rahman! Thank you very much! By Allah, this is an expensive perfume. Whenever I apply it, people do not even notice!" He then began to smell his scarf and said, "By Allah, I have excellent taste!"

This happened to me more than fifteen years ago. Since that time, Abdul-Majid has graduated from the university and has been employed for years; but this incident has remained in his memory. Sometimes he even fondly jokes of this incident when we meet.

Yes! Be complimentary. Controlling people's emotions and acquiring their love is an easy job. However, many times we ignore these basic means through which we can win people over. Do not then be surprised if I say that the man with the best ever character, the Prophet ﷺ used to employ these tactics, and even

better ones!

In the early years of Islam, when the Muslims were being persecuted for their religion in Makkah, they subsequently migrated to Madinah, leaving their homes and wealth behind. At this time, 'Abd ar-Rahman bin 'Awf came to Madinah as a migrant. Although, 'Abd ar-Rahman used to be a successful businessman in Makkah, he arrived in Madinah poor, with no possessions to his name. As a quick solution to this widespread problem, the Prophet ﷺ joined the emigrants and the helpers in a bond of brotherhood. Thus, he made 'Abd ar-Rahman bin 'Awf and Sa'd bin ar-Rabi' al-Ansari, brothers.

Their souls were sound and their hearts were clean. Hence, Sa'd said to 'Abd ar-Rahman, "Dear brother, I am the wealthiest of all the people of Madinah. Split my wealth in two and take one half and leave the other half for me." Sa'd then felt that perhaps 'Abd ar-Rahman wanted to get married, and he may not find a wife, so he proposed that he should help him in getting married. 'Abd ar-Rahman then said, "May Allah bless you in your family and wealth. Please, just guide me to the marketplace."

Although 'Abd ar-Rahman left his wealth in Makkah and the disbelievers confiscated it, he was intelligent and had good business sense and experience. Sa'd upon his request, led him to the marketplace, after which 'Abd ar-Rahman bought merchandise on credit, sold it on the spot, and made profits. Thereby, he acquired capital with which he could do business. He was an expert in buying, selling and bargaining. After a while, he earned some wealth for himself and got married. He then came to the Prophet ﷺ smelling of saffron, a scent usually worn by women,

although it was not unusual since he was the groom.

The Prophet ﷺ being a doctor of hearts with an observant, caring personality, would seek out moments where he could captivate people's hearts. He noticed this change in 'Abd ar-Rahman, and began to pay attention to the scent, and then said to him, "What's new?"

'Abd ar-Rahman happily said, "O Messenger of Allah, I have married a woman from the Ansaar." The Prophet ﷺ became surprised as to how soon he was able to marry, having just migrated!

He then asked, "What did you give her as dowry?" 'Abd ar-Rahman replied, "I paid gold, equal to the weight of a date-stone."

The Prophet ﷺ then wanted to increase him in his joy, thus he said, "Give a wedding banquet, even if it is only with one sheep"; meaning, hold a celebration for us all for your wedding. The Prophet ﷺ then prayed for more blessings in his wealth and business, hence he was blessed.

'Abd ar-Rahman said while describing his livelihood and business, "If you saw me then, you would have known that if I were to have turned over a stone, I would have found gold or silver underneath it!"

The Prophet ﷺ had an observant, caring personality, even with the weak and poor. He would make them feel valued. He would make them feel that he was aware of them, that they were important to him, and that he valued their efforts, no matter how insignificant they were. When he missed them, he would remember to mention them with good and praise their work,

which would encourage others to do the same.

There was, in Madinah, a black lady who was a righteous believer. She used to clean the mosque. The Prophet ﷺ would see her every now and then, and marvel at her keenness. Later, several days went by and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not see her. When he asked about her, his Companions said, "She has passed away, O Messenger of Allah." He replied, "Why did you not inform me about this?" They then began to minimise the importance of her death, saying that she was a poor and obscure person, and not worthy enough for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to be informed about her death. They also said, "She died in the middle of the night, so we did not want to wake you up."

The Prophet ﷺ was then very keen to pray over her, for her work - even if the people deemed it insignificant - was great in the sight of Allah. But how could he pray over her whilst she was dead and buried? "Lead me to her grave," he ordered. The Companions then went with the Prophet ﷺ, until they reached her grave. The Prophet ﷺ prayed over her and said, "These graves are filled with darkness for their dwellers, but Allah illuminates these graves when I pray over them."

Tell me, in Allah's Name, how would they feel, those who saw the Prophet ﷺ value such a small deed by a weak woman? How great would their zeal be to do what this woman used to?

Allow me to whisper this in your ears: We live in a society where such skills are not valued, so pay attention to this! Let not your enthusiasm die out due to a group of cumbersome and antagonistic people who, no matter how much you admire their good qualities, or praise them with soft and beautiful words,

would not be affected. They respond to your politeness with dull and boring words, with no taste, colour or smell!

One noteworthy story concerning such people concerns a young man I know who was once invited to a great wedding ceremony where very important people were invited. He passed by a marketplace on his way and entered a perfume shop and pretending that he wanted to buy perfume. Hence, the shopkeeper welcomed him kindly and began to spray various expensive and sweet-smelling perfumes on him, so he may choose whatever may suit him best.

However, when this friend of ours managed to cover his entire garment with perfume, he kindly said to the shopkeeper, "Thank you, very much! If any of these perfumes impress me, I might return to you."

He then rushed off to the ceremony, hoping to arrive before the scent wore off. He finally arrived and sat next to his friend, Khalid, but Khalid did not notice the scent or even pass a comment. This friend of ours then said in astonishment, "Can't you smell the beautiful scent?" Khalid said: "No." Our friend said, "Your nose must be blocked!" Upon hearing this, Khalid instantly responded, "If my nose was blocked, I would not have smelt your odour!"

An acknowledgement…

No matter how successful one becomes, he would irrevocably remain human, and dance to words of praise.

(28)

Only pass comment on what is good

Some people are overzealously in making observations and passing comments. They do not seem to ever stop praising or being complimentary. However, as the old saying goes, "When something transgresses the limits, it becomes its opposite", or "whoever hurries for something before its due time, is often punished by being deprived thereof."

Do praise things that are beautiful and charming – things over which a person feels happy when they are noticed, where he expects admiration and is moved upon hearing words of praise. As for things that people usually feel embarrassed about, or feel mortified upon noticing, then close your eyes to those.

For example: you enter your friend's house and notice that the chairs are very old. Be careful that you do not become an irritating person who cannot cease to offer his unwanted advice.

Be careful and do not let your tongue slip by saying: "Why don't you buy new chairs? Half of the chandelier is not functional. Why don't you buy a new one? The paint on your wall is peeling! Why don't you paint the wall?"

Dear brother, he did not ask you for your advice. You are not a professional decorator whose advice should be sought.

Remain silent. Perhaps he is not able to change the decoration. Perhaps he is financially restricted, and so on. None is more cumbersome than a man who embarrasses people by noticing things that humiliate him, and then rouses the topic and begins to pass comments.

Similarly, if his garments were to be old, or his car air-conditioner was not working, then either speak good, or remain silent.

They say that a man once visited his friend. His friend, being the host, gave him bread to eat with oil. The guest then said, "If only there was thyme with the bread!" The host then went to his family and asked for some thyme, but found out that they had none. He then went out to buy some, but he did not have enough money. The shopkeeper refused to sell it to him on credit. Thus, he came back home, took his utensil with which he made ablution and gave it to the shopkeeper as a deposit, so that in case he was not able to pay for the thyme, the shopkeeper could always sell the utensil to recover his money. He then took the thyme and returned to the guest and gave it to him.

When the guest finished eating, he said, "Praise be to Allah who fed us, quenched our thirst and made us content with what He has given us."

The host, upon hearing this, sighed in pain and said, "If Allah really had made you content with what He has given you, then my ablution utensil would not have been given as a security!"

Similarly, if you were to visit a patient, do not say to him, "Oh! Your face has gone yellow! Your eyes seem to be wandering! Your skin is dry!" How strange! Are you his doctor? Speak good,

or remain silent.

It is said that a man once visited a patient and sat next to him for a while. He then asked him as to what was ailing him. The patient told him what was wrong, and that his illness was serious. The visitor, upon hearing this, screamed and said: "Oh no! So-and-so, a friend of mine had the same illness and he died because of it! My brother's friend also caught this disease, and he remained bedridden until he died! My brother-in-law's neighbour also caught this disease and died." All the while, the patient listening to this was about to explode!

Then, when the visitor finished what he had to say and decided to leave, he turned to the patient and said, "By the way, do you advise me with anything?" The patient said, "Yes! When you finally leave, do not bother ever coming back to me!" If you visit a patient, then do not mention death to him.

It is also said that once an old woman's friend, who was another old woman, fell ill. The old woman would ask her sons, one by one, to take her to her ill friend for a visit, but they would continue to make excuses, until one of the sons finally agreed to take her. So he took her in his car. When they arrived at the house, the old woman got out of the car whilst the son waited. The old woman then visited her friend to find that she was completely beset by her illness. She greeted her and prayed for her. When she began to leave, she walked for a while in the lobby with her friend's weeping daughters, and said, innocently, "Unfortunately, I cannot come to you whenever I want. Your mother is severely ill, and it seems that she will die. So let me say to you now, 'May Allah grant you all befitting patience over her death!'"

Hence, be careful, O intelligent person! Only pass comment on things that are a source of joy, and not depressing.

A problem…

If you were ever forced to comment on something bad, such as dirt on a garment, or a bad odour, then do so tactfully. Be clever and kind while doing so.

(29)

Do not interfere in matters that do not concern you

"From the excellence of one's Islam is to leave that which does not concern him."

How beautiful is this expression, especially if you were to hear it from the righteous and pure mouth of the Messenger of Allah – may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him! Yes, to leave that which does not concern him!

How many are those cumbersome people who bother you by interfering in matters that do not concern them? They bother you when they see your watch, "How much did you buy this for?"

You reply, "This was given to me as a gift".

Then they would say, "A gift? From whom?"

You reply, "From a friend."

He would continue, "Your friend from the university? Or your locality? Or elsewhere?"

You reply, "Well, a friend of mine from the university."

He keeps pressing, "Okay, but what was the occasion?"

You respond, "Well, an occasion, from our university days."

He then says, "Yes, but what occasion in particular? Graduation? Or when you went on a trip? Or something else?"

He would continue to ask you questions about an utterly worthless matter! I ask you, by Allah, wouldn't you feel like shouting at him, saying, "Do not interfere in that which does not concern you!' And even worse is if he were to put you in an awkward situation by asking you an embarrassing question in public!

I remember, once I was in a gathering with a group of my friends. After the Maghrib prayer, one of my friends' mobile phone rang. He was sitting next to me. He answered the phone, "Yes?"

His wife shouted on the phone, "Hello! Where are you, you donkey?" Her voice was so loud that I could hear their conversation well. He said, "I am fine, may Allah protect you." It seemed as though he had promised her to take her to her family, but became busy with us. His wife became really angry and said, "May Allah not protect you! You are quite happy to be with your friends all the while I wait for you. By Allah, you are a bull!"

He said, "May Allah be pleased with you. I will come to you after 'Ishaa."

I realised that his speech did not exactly correspond to hers. Thereafter I realised that he was speaking in this manner in order to save himself from embarrassment.

He then finished his call. I began to look at those present, thinking to myself that one of them will ask him, "Who was that on the phone? What does he want from you? Why did your face change after the conversation?" But Allah had mercy on him; no

one interfered in a matter which did not concern them.

Likewise, if you were to visit a patient and ask him about his illness, and he were to reply vaguely, "al-Hamdulillah, nothing major, just minor illness", and such expressions that do not explicitly answer the question, do not embarrass him by persisting on asking detailed questions, such as, "I am sorry, but what exactly is the illness? Please clarify what you said" and so on. Why the need to embarrass him?

From the excellence of one's Islam is to leave that which does not concern him. I mean, are you really waiting for him to tell you, "I have haemorrhoids", or "I have an injury, in an embarrassing place", etc? As long as he gave you a vague response, there is no need to ask him for details. I do not mean that he should not question the patient about his illness. What I mean is that one should not ask detailed questions about another's illness.

Another example of this is a person who called out to a student in front of all the people in a public gathering, and asked in a loud voice, "Hey! Ahmad! Did you pass?" Ahmad said, "Yes'. He asked, "What percentage? What grade?"

If he truly cared for him, he would have asked him when he was alone. There was also no need to go into details by asking "What percentage? Why didn't you revise? Why weren't you accepted in the university?" If he was really ready to help him, then he could have taken him to the side and spoken to him about whatever he liked. But as for displaying his dirty laundry in public, then that certainly was not genuine!

The Prophet ﷺ said, "From the excellence of one's Islam is to leave that which does not concern him."

However, be careful. Do not make a matter larger than it is. Once I was travelling to Madinah and was busy delivering a number of lectures. So I agreed with a kind young man to take my two sons, 'Abd ar-Rahman and Ibrahim, after 'Asr, to their Qur'an memorisation circles, or some summer amusement centre, and to return with them after 'Isha.

'Abd ar-Rahman was ten years old. I feared that that young man may ask him some useless questions, such as, "What is your mother's name? Where is your house? How many brothers do you have? How much pocket money does your father give you?" So I warned 'Abd ar-Rahman and said, "If he were to ask you an inappropriate question, just say to him that the Prophet ﷺ said, 'From the excellence of one's Islam is to leave that which does not concern him.'" I repeated to him the Hadith until he had memorised it.

'Abd ar-Rahman and his brother then sat in the car with this young man. 'Abd ar-Rahman was at the time both very tense and respectful. The young man said out of kindness, "May Allah prolong your life, O 'Abd ar-Rahman!" 'Abd ar-Rahman replied, "May Allah prolong your life, too!" The poor young man wanted to lighten up the atmosphere a bit, so he said, "Is the Shaykh delivering any lecture today?" 'Abd ar-Rahman tried to remember the Hadith, but his memory did not help him, so he yelled, "Do not interfere in things that do not concern you!" The young man said, "I mean, I would just like to attend his lecture and benefit." 'Abd ar-Rahman then thought that he was trying to be clever, so he repeated the same response, "'Do not interfere in things that do not concern you." The young man then said, "I am sorry, 'Abd al-Rahman. But what I mean is…", but 'Abd ar-Rahman again

shouted, "No! Do not interfere in that which does not concern you!" They remained on these terms until I returned. 'Abd ar-Rahman then informed me of the entire story with pride, so I laughed and had to explain the concept to him once again.

Workshop…

Struggling against yourself to free yourself from interfering in others' affairs is exhausting in the beginning, but easy in the end.

(30)

How to deal with a meddlesome person

At times, some people may grab your phone – without your permission – and begin to read your text messages. One of my friends was invited to a wedding party of a judge, and nearly all the invitees were renowned scholars. My friend sat amongst them engaged in deep conversation. Meanwhile, the presence of a mobile phone in his pocket really bothered him, so he decided to take it out and place it on the table, beside him. The respected scholar sitting next to him was quite involved in the conversation with him. Habitually, the respected scholar lifted the mobile phone resting on the table, and when he looked at the screen, his face changed and he returned the mobile phone to where it was. My friend noticed and tried his best to control his laughter.

When he left the party, I sat with him in his car. He had placed his phone to his side. It happened that I picked up the phone, as the respected scholar in the wedding party did, and when I looked at the screen, I began to laugh hysterically. Do you know why?

Many people write various messages on their mobile phone screens, such as his name, or 'Remember Allah', etc. As for my friend, he had written, 'Put the phone back, you nosy person!'

Many such people tend to interfere in other people's personal matters. Hence, it becomes habitual for them to sit in the car with you, open up the glove compartment and look at what's inside! A nosy woman would look into another woman's handbag to take her lipstick or eye shadow. One of them may call you and ask where you are. When you say, "I have some work to do", he would ask, "Where? Who is with you?" etc. Some people we mix with often treat us in this manner. How do we then deal with them?

One of the most important things you must not forget is to try to avoid the person as much as possible. Make sure no one becomes upset with you in the process. Be diplomatic whilst extracting yourself from such situations without creating problems between yourselves. Gaining enemies or losing friends must not be taken lightly, no matter what the causes may be.

One of the best ways of dealing with such intruders is by responding to a question by another question, or changing the topic altogether, thereby making him forget the question he asked. For example, if he were to ask you, "How much monthly salary do you make?" you could reply jokingly with a smile, "Why do you ask? Have you found a luring job for me?" If he says, "Not really, I just wanted to know", you could say, "Salaries these days are a great problem. It seems to be caused by high oil prices!" He might then say, "Well, what do oil prices have to do with salaries?" You could then say, "Oil prices are what determine other prices. Don't you see that wars happen because of it?" He may say, "No. That is not true. There are other reasons for wars. The world is full of wars nowadays…" Thus, he would forget about his initial question.

So what do you think? Did you not cleverly get out of the predicament?

Similarly, if he were to ask you about your job or where you will travel to next, simply ask him, "Why do you ask? Do you wish to travel with me?" He would say, "I don't know, but tell me anyway!" You could say, "If you did travel with me, you would have to pay for the tickets!" He would then begin to speak about the tickets and forget the original topic.

This is how we can escape from such scenarios without causing problems amongst ourselves.

Halt…

If you've had to face someone who interferes with matters that do not concern him, then be better than him. Try to seek the best exit from the situation without hurting him.

(31)

Do not criticise!

A man sits in his friend's car, and the first thing he says is, "Wow! How old your car is!"

He enters his house and upon seeing the furniture he says, "Oh, you still haven't changed your furniture?"

When he sees his children, he says, "MashaAllah! They are very sweet! But why don't you give them better clothes to wear?"

When his poor wife gives him food, after having to stand in the kitchen for hours on end cooking, he looks at the food and says, "O God! Why didn't she cook rice? Oh! It is lacking in salt. I wasn't in the mood to eat this!"

He enters a fruit shop to find it full of a variety of fruits. He asks the shopkeeper, "Do you have mangoes?"

The shopkeeper says, "No. We only have them during the summer."

He says, "OK. Do you have watermelon, then?"

The shopkeeper replies, "No."

His complexion then changes. He says, "You don't have anything here! Why did you even bother opening up a shop?" and

leaves the shop. He forgets that the shop has more than forty other types of fruit.

No doubt, some people bother you by their frequent criticisms. Nothing seems to please them in the world. They cannot notice, in a delicious meal, except a strand of hair that mistakenly dropped therein. They cannot notice in a clean garment except a drop of ink that affected it by error. Neither can they notice in a beneficial book except an innocent printing error. Hence, none seems to be saved from their criticisms. They always have comments to pass. These people scrutinise everything, be it great or small.

I know a person, who was a colleague of mine during our secondary education and university days, and our relationship to this day continues, except that I do not remember him ever making a positive comment about anything.

I asked him about a book I wrote, which was praised by many people, and of which hundreds of thousands of copies were printed, and he coldly replied, "Well, it is ok, but it has an inappropriate story. I didn't like the font size, either. The print quality is also poor", and so on.

I asked him once about someone's performance in the Friday sermon, and he did not seem to mention anything positive, until he became more burdensome for me than a mountain. I then wouldn't ask him for his opinion with respect to anything, because I already knew it would be negative.

You can say the same about someone who expects everyone to be exemplary, thus, he expects his wife to keep the house 100% clean twenty-four hours a day. He also expects his wife to

keep the children nice and clean all day. If he is visited by guests, he expects her to cook the best dishes. If he sits with her, he expects her to talk about the best topics.

He expects the same from his children. He wants them to be perfect at everything, excellent with his friends and with whomever he meets on the street or a marketplace, etc. If anyone of them falls short, he would consume him by his speech, over-criticise and repeatedly pass comments, until people become bored of him. This is because he cannot see on a white page but a black spot.

Such people usually punish themselves by their nature. Their closest friends dislike them and avoid their company.

SubhanAllah! All the while, Allah says, "And when you speak, be just!"

Our mother 'A'ishah – may Allah be pleased with her – said, whilst describing the way the Prophet ﷺ would treat others, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ never complained about food. If he liked it, he ate it. If he didn't like it, he simply left it.' (al-Bukhari and Muslim) Absolutey! He never used to make a fuss about anything.

Anas – may Allah be pleased with him – said, "I served the Messenger of Allah ﷺ for nine years. I never heard him comment about anything I did, 'Why did you do this?!' He never criticised me for anything at all. By Allah! He never even said uff to me!" This is how he was, and this is how we should be.

By saying that, however, I am not suggesting that you should not advise others, or that you should remain silent over their mistakes. Rather, you should not scrutinise everything people do,

especially in worldly matters. Learn to overlook such matters.

If a guest were to knock at your door, you would welcome him and take him to the drawing room. When you bring some tea, he would take the tea cups. Upon looking into the cup, he would comment, "Why didn't you fill up the cup?"

If you say, "Shall I give you more?"

He would say, "No, leave it. This is enough."

He then asks for water and you give him a glass of water which he drinks. After he is finished, he says, "The water was quite warm."

He then turns to the air conditioner and says, "Your air conditioner does not seem to work!", and begins to complain about the heat.

Wouldn't you feel that this person is very burdensome, and wish that he leaves and never returns?

People dislike too much criticism.

However, if you really do need to criticise, then package it well and then present it with kindness to others. Present it as if it were a suggestion, rather than a criticism. Present it indirectly, or using vague expressions.

If the Messenger of Allah ﷺ ever noticed a person making a mistake, he would not confront him directly. Rather, he would say, "What is wrong with the people, who do such-and-such?" which would indirectly imply, "I mean by that you, dear neighbour, so please pay attention!"

Once upon a time, three zealous young men travelled to

Madinah, wanting to know how exactly the Prophet ﷺ worshipped and offered his prayers. They asked the wives of the Prophet ﷺ what he would do in private. His wives then informed them that sometimes he would fast and at other times he would not. He would also sleep for a part of the night and pray in the other part.

They then said to each other, "But this is the Messenger of Allah ﷺ whose past sins Allah has forgiven." Then each of them made a decision.

One of them said, "I will not get married. I will remain a bachelor and therefore, I will be free for worship."

Another said, "I will always fast, every day."

The third one said, "I will not sleep at night. I will pray all night long."

When news of this reached the Prophet – may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him – he stood on his pulpit, praised Allah and glorified him, and then said, "What is wrong with the people?", notice the vague expression. He did not say, "What is wrong with so-and-so?" Rather, he said, "What is wrong with the people that they say, such-and such? Yet, I pray and go to sleep. I fast and sometimes I do not. I also marry women. Whoever turns away from my Sunnah is not from me." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

On another occasion, the Prophet ﷺ noticed that some of those who prayed with him raised their eyes to the sky during the prayer. This is wrong, for one should look at the place of prostration during the prayer.

He said, "What is wrong with the people that they raise their

eyes up to the sky in their prayers?" When they did not cease from this and continued to look up, he did not expose them, or mention them by names. Rather, he said, "They must stop, or else their sight will be snatched away." (al-Bukhari)

Bareerah was a slave woman in Madinah. She wanted to be freed, and therefore, asked her owner to free her. Her owner stipulated that she give him money for her freedom. Bareerah then came to 'A'ishah to ask her for financial assistance. 'A'ishah said, "If you wish, I can give your price to your owners so you could be free, on the condition that your loyalty lies with me." The slave woman informed her owners about this, but they refused. They wanted to profit on both; they wanted her price as well as her debt of loyalty.

'A'ishah then asked the Prophet ﷺ and the Prophet became surprised at their fervour for wealth, and their refusal to allow this poor woman to be free!

He said to 'A'ishah, "Buy her, and then free her. The debt of loyalty is only for the one who frees the slave." Meaning, the debt of loyalty will always be yours so long as you pay, and do not worry about their conditions for they are unjust.

Then the Prophet ﷺ stood on his pulpit and said, "What is wrong with the people", and he did not say, "What is wrong with such-and-such a family?" The Prophet ﷺ continued, "...that they stipulate conditions that do not exist in the Book of Allah? Whoever stipulates a condition that does not exist in Allah's Book, he does not deserve that condition to be fulfilled, even if he were to stipulate a hundred such conditions!" (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Yes! This is how he said it. He waved his stick from afar, but

didn't strike anything with it.

What can be better for you than to say to your wife, who does not keep the house tidy, "Yesterday, we stayed with a friend of mine, and everyone praised the cleanliness of his house." What can be better than for you to say to your son, who does not pray in the mosque, "I am amazed at this person in our neighbourhood! I never seem to miss him in the mosque at all!" Meaning, "It is you I am referring to so please pay attention!"

It is right for you to ask why people dislike criticism, to which I would say in response, "Because it makes them feel deficient. Everyone loves perfection."

It is said that once a very simple man wanted to be in control. To that end he got hold of two thermoses, one green and the other red.

He filled them both with cold water. He then sat in people's way and began to shout, "Free, cold water!" Those who were thirsty would come to him, grab a glass and pour some water for themselves. When this man would notice that the thirsty person wanted to drink from the green thermos, he would say, "No! Drink from the red one." So he would drink from the red one.

When another person would come who would want to drink from the red one, he would say, "No! Drink from the green one!"

If someone were to object and ask, "What is the difference between the two?!" He would say, "I am responsible for the water. Either be pleased with what you have, or help yourself with water from elsewhere!"

It is the constant feeling in a person to be recognised and acknowledged as being important that drives him.

A bee and a fly…

Be like a bee that seeks out the scent and ignores the filth. Do not be like a fly that seeks out the bloody wounds.

(32)

Do not be dictatorial

Compare between three fathers. Each one of them sees his son sitting in front of the television screen during the days of his examination.

The first one says to his son, "Muhammad! Revise your lessons!"

The second says, "Majid! If you do not revise, by Allah, I will hit you and I will not give you any pocket money!"

The third says, "Salih! Would you please revise your lessons? It would be better than watching television, don't you think?"

Which of the three would be considered best manners? Undoubtedly, the third, since he presented his order to him as if it were only a suggestion.

Similarly, it should be the case when dealing with your wife. "Sarah, can you please make a cup of tea?" "Hind, I would like to have an early lunch today, if possible."

Likewise, when a person errs, try to rectify it by ways in which he would think that rectification was his own initiative. For example, your son is often not present for prayers in the mosque. You can say to him, for instance, "Sa'd, don't you wish to enter paradise? Surely you do! In that case, you should guard

your prayers."

Once upon a time, in a Bedouin tent in the desert, a woman was groaning while giving birth. Her husband was next to her, waiting for her to deliver. The labour became severe for the woman, and she finally gave birth, but to a black child! The man looked at himself and his wife to find both of them fair-skinned. He became surprised as to how his son could be black. The devil whispered into his heart saying, "Perhaps, this baby is someone else's. Perhaps a black man fornicated with her, and thus she became pregnant! Perhaps…"

The man became confused and went to Madinah and approached the Messenger of Allah ﷺ whilst he was sitting with his Companions.

He said, "O Messenger of Allah! My wife gave birth to a black child! We have never had any black person in our family!"

The Prophet ﷺ looked at him. Although, he was well able to lecture him about having good thoughts about others, and that he should not have accused his wife, he decided to try a different method with him to solve his problem. He decided to make the man solve his own problem. He decided to give him examples with which he could easily discover the answer to his problem. But what kind of example should he have given him? The example of trees? Or bees? Or the Persians and the Romans?

The Prophet ﷺ looked at him and noticed that he was a Bedouin who looked very confused due to all the thoughts that were coming to his mind about his wife.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Do you have any camels?"

"Yes", said the man.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "What is their colour?"

He said, "Red."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Is there any black amongst them?"

"No", he replied.

The Prophet said, "Is there any grey amongst them?"

"Yes", the man replied.

The Prophet said, "From where did that come?"

Meaning; so long as they are all red, male and female, and not a single one of them is of any different colour, how did a red camel give birth to a grey camel, which happens to be different to that of the mother and the father?

The man thought for a while and said, "Perhaps it is due to heredity". Meaning; it is possible that one of its ancestors was grey. Hence, the grey colour remained in the lineage, and was inherited by this baby camel.

Then the Prophet ﷺ said, "Perhaps, your son has also inherited this colour because of heredity." (Muslim and Ibn Majah)

The man heard the response, thought for a while and discovered that he came to a conclusion himself. He felt satisfied and certain of the response, and went back to his wife.

On another occasion, the Prophet ﷺ sat with his Companions and began to inform them about various good actions. Amongst the things he mentioned was that he said, "In the intimacy of one of you is charity"; meaning for one of you to have intercourse with his wife is an action that carries a reward from Allah.

Upon hearing this, the Companions became surprised and said, "O Messenger of Allah, one of us comes to his wife to fulfil his desire, and for that he would be rewarded?"

The Prophet ﷺ then responded in a way which made them feel that they were the ones who came up with the answer, and hence, there was no need for a discussion for them to be convinced further. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Don't you see that if he were to do it in a forbidden way, he would be sinful?"

They said, "Yes."

"So therefore, if he were to do it in a permissible way, he would be rewarded", said the Prophet ﷺ.

In fact, even during a discussion with others, he would lead them on to the answer by beginning with matters that they both agreed upon.

The Prophet ﷺ once left for Makkah along with a thousand and four hundred of his Companions, but the Quraysh blocked his way. This led to the famous al-Hudaybiyyah incident, where after a long session of discussion between the Prophet ﷺ and the Quraysh, they agreed upon a peace accord.

Suhayl bin 'Amr was the one who represented Quraysh whilst writing the conditions of the pledge. The Prophet ﷺ agreed with Suhayl on several conditions, and from amongst these were:

- The Muslims should return to Madinah without having performed 'Umrah
- The Muslims in Madinah were not to accept anyone who wished to accept Islam from the people of Makkah and decided to migrate in Madinah.

- Whoever left Islam and decided to go to the pagans in Makkah would be accepted

There were many other conditions that were apparently a sign of Muslim defeat and humiliation.

In reality, though, the Quraysh were afraid of such a large number of Muslims, and realised that if they wished, they could have easily conquered Makkah. For this reason, the Quraysh were forced to be diplomatic. They could not dream that they would ever manage to get away with a quarter of those conditions. Most of the Companions were uneasy with these conditions. But how could they ever protest? The one who writing the contract and agreeing with its conditions was he who did not speak from his desires.

'Umar was desperate. He was looking right and left, wishing if only he could do something. 'Umar quickly approached Abu Bakr to discuss this with him. Due to his wisdom, he did not begin by protesting. Rather, he began with things they both agreed on. Thus, he began to ask Abu Bakr questions, the answers to which were none other than, "Indeed! Yes! Correct!"

He said, "O Abu Bakr, isn't he the Messenger of Allah?"

"Indeed, he is!" said Abu Bakr.

He said, "Are we not Muslims?"

"Indeed, we are!" replied Abu Bakr.

He said, "Are they not pagans?"

"Sure they are!" replied Abu Bakr.

'Umar said, "Are we not upon the truth?"

"Indeed, we are!" replied Abu Bakr.

'Umar said, "Are they not upon falsehood?"

"Surely, they are!" replied Abu Bakr.

'Umar said, "Why should we then surrender in a matter related to our religion?"

Abu Bakr then said, "O 'Umar, is he not the Messenger of Allah?"

"Sure he is", said 'Umar.

Abu Bakr said, "Then obey him! For I bear witness that He is the Messenger of Allah."

'Umar then said, "And I also bear witness that he is the Messenger of Allah", and went away. He tried to restrain himself but couldn't, so he approached the Messenger of Allah – may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him.

He said, "O Messenger of Allah, are you not the Messenger of Allah?"

"I am, indeed!" said the Prophet ﷺ.

He said, "Are we not Muslims?"

"Of course, we are", said the Prophet ﷺ.

He said, "Are they not pagans?"

"Yes, they are", replied the Prophet ﷺ.

He said, "Then why are we compromising in a matter related to religion?"

The Prophet ﷺ then said, "I am a slave of Allah and His Messenger. I would not disobey His order. He would never mislead

me."

'Umar remained silent. The treaty was signed, and the Muslims returned to Madinah. Days went by and the Quraysh broke the treaty. The Prophet ﷺ then conquered Makkah and purified the Sacred House of the idols. Then, 'Umar realised that he was incorrect to oppose the Prophet's decision. Thus, he used to say, "I never ceased to fast, give charity, pray and free slaves, due to what I did that day, fearing the consequences of the words I spoke that day, until I began to regain some hope."

How excellent was 'Umar! How excellent was the Messenger of Allah ﷺ before him!

How can we benefit from this skill?

If your son does not memorise the Qur'an, and you would like him to do so eagerly, then begin with things that you both agree on.

You can say to him, "Don't you wish that Allah should love you? Don't you wish to raise your rank in Paradise?"

No doubt he would reply, "Indeed!"

Then, you can present your advice to him as a suggestion, saying, "In that case, if you were to attend Qur'an memorisation circles…"

Likewise, if you were to notice a woman who does not wear a Hijaab, speak to her about things you both agree on. You should say, "I know you are a Muslim woman, and therefore, always eager to do good." She would say, "Correct, al-hamdulillah."

You would further say, "You are a chaste woman who loves Allah."

She would say, "Yes, al-hamdulillah."

Then, you can present your advice in the form of a suggestion, saying, "Perhaps, you should pay more attention to the Hijaab aspect of Islam, and show more enthusiasm to cover."

This is how we can achieve what we want from the people, without them even realising.

A twinkle…

You can always eat honey without demolishing the beehive.

(33)

Hold the stick from the middle

"Thank you very much for deciding to teach as a career. Allah has gifted you with a flair for teaching. Your students love you very much. However, I wish that you would not turn up late for work in the morning."

"You are beautiful. Your house is in order. I don't deny that the children are tiring you out. However, if only you could look after their clothes more."

This is how a righteous person behaves with the people. He mentions the good points first and then brings his attention to the faults, in order to be balanced in his approach.

When you criticise, try to mention where the person is right before mentioning where he is wrong. Always try to give the impression that you have a positive view of him.

When you caution him over his errors, this does not mean that you are belittling him, or that you have forgotten his good deeds, or that you should only mention his wrongs.

On the contrary, you should make him realise that your criticisms of him are insignificant in comparison to his good deeds.

The Prophet ﷺ was very beloved amongst his Companions. He would employ great techniques whilst dealing with them.

Once he stood with his Companions and gazed at the sky, as if he was contemplating or looking for something. He then said, "This is the season where knowledge will be snatched away from people, until they would not possess any of it"; meaning, the people would turn away from the Qur'an, its teachings and the Sacred Knowledge. They would not show any eagerness to attain it, nor would they understand it.

"…snatched away from them…" meaning it would be taken away from them.

Upon hearing this, a noble Companion stood up – he was Ziyad bin Labid al-Ansari – and said with all zeal, "O Messenger of Allah, how can it be snatched away from us? We have read the Qur'an! By Allah, we will continue to read it! We will make our wives and children read it!"

The Prophet looked at him and found him to be a young man full of zeal and enthusiasm for religion. He then decided to correct his understanding, thus he said, "May your mother be bereaved, O Ziyad! Even though, I surely consider you from the jurists of the people of Madinah!" This was a praise of Ziyad, for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to say to him in front of people that he was from the jurists of Madinah. This is from the positive and bright pages from Ziyad's life.

He then said, 'The Jews and the Christians have the Torah and the Gospel. How has it benefited them?" (Sahih – narrated by al-Tirmidhi and al-Hakim)

Meaning, it is not the presence of the Qur'an that matters. What matters is its recitation, the knowledge of its meanings, and then acting on its rulings. This is how great the way the Prophet

ﷺ dealt with the people was.

On another occasion, the Prophet ﷺ went to some of the Arab tribes calling them to Islam. He would choose the most beautiful words to encourage them to respond to his call and enter the fold of Islam.

One of the tribes he went to was known as Banu 'Abdullah. When the Prophet ﷺ called them to Allah and presented his message to them, he said, "O Banu 'Abdullah! Allah has chosen a beautiful name for your father!"; meaning, you are not Banu 'Abd al-Izza, or Banu 'Abd al-Laat. Rather, you are Banu 'Abdullah. Thankfully, there is no paganism involved in your name, and therefore, you should enter into Islam.

In fact, he was so proficient in his ways that he would send indirect messages to people, showing his amazement with them, and that he wanted good for them. When such indirect messages reach those intended, then perhaps they may affect them more than direct messages.

Khalid bin al-Walid – may Allah be pleased with him – was a hero. He was not just any hero, but a courageous one. The Prophet ﷺ would wish that he embrace Islam. But how could he? For he was eager to take part in every battle against the Muslims. In fact, he was the greatest reason for the Muslim defeat in the battle of Uhud.

The Prophet ﷺ once said of him, "If he were to come to us, we would truly honour him and prefer him over others". How did this have an effect on him?

Let us cite the story from the beginning. Khalid was from the

severest of the disbelievers and one of their leaders. He would never miss an opportunity to fight the Messenger of Allah ﷺ or ambush him. When the Prophet ﷺ came to al-Hudaybiyyah with the Muslims with the intention of performing 'Umrah, Khalid along with other pagan knights set out and met the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions at a place called 'Asfaan. Khalid stood close to them just waiting for an opportunity to attack the Messenger of Allah ﷺ with an arrow or a sword. Thus, he began to wait for an ambush.

The Prophet ﷺ prayed the dawn prayers with his Companions as the enemies watched. They wanted to attack him, but they did not find it feasible. The Prophet ﷺ realised their intent and therefore prayed the 'Asr prayer with his Companions as the prayer of fear; meaning, he grouped his Companions into two. A group prayed with him whilst the other group stood guard. This really affected Khalid and his Companions. He said to himself, "The man has been prevented from us", meaning, there are those who would protect him and defend him against harm.

Then the Prophet ﷺ, along with his Companions, departed taking a route on the right in order to avoid Khalid and his companions. He reached al-Hudaybiyyah, signed a treaty with the Quraysh that he would perform 'Umrah next year, and returned to Madinah.

Khalid noticed that that Quraysh were becoming weaker and weaker as days went by. He thought to himself, "What is left? Where shall I go? To Negus? I cannot, because even he follows Muhammad, whose followers are living under his protection. Perhaps, I should go to Heraclius? No. How can I leave my faith

for Christianity, or Judaism, and live amongst non-Arabs?"

Whilst Khalid was contemplating what to do, as the days and months passed him by until a whole year had elapsed, there came the opportunity for the Muslims to perform 'Umrah. Thus, they headed for Makkah.

The Prophet ﷺ entered Makkah, but Khalid was not able to bear seeing the Muslims in a state of Ihram. He left Makkah and disappeared for four days – the days the Prophet ﷺ spent in Makkah. The Prophet ﷺ performed his 'Umrah and began to gaze at the pathways and houses of Makkah, to recollect memories. He remembered the brave man, Khalid bin al-Walid, so he turned to al-Walid bin al-Walid, who was Khalid's brother. Al-Walid was a Muslim who came with the Prophet ﷺ to perform 'Umrah.

The Prophet ﷺ decided to send an indirect message to Khalid, encouraging him to enter into Islam.

The Prophet ﷺ said to al-Walid, "Where is Khalid?"

Al-Walid was surprised by the question. He replied, "Allah will bring him, O Messenger of Allah."

The Prophet ﷺ then said, "Someone like him cannot be ignorant of Islam! If he were to have reserved his ability to inflict damage and harshness for the cause of the Muslims, it would have been better for him."

He then said, "If he were to come to us, we would certainly have honoured him, and preferred him over others."

Al-Walid became happy and began to search for Khalid in Makkah, but couldn't find him. When they finally decided to return to Madinah, he wrote a letter for his brother, saying:

"In the name of Allah, the most Gracious the most Merciful. To proceed"

I have not seen anything as amazing as your aversion from Islam, knowing your intellectual capacity! Can anyone be ignorant of something like Islam? The Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked me about you and said, 'Where is Khalid?'

I said to him, 'Allah will surely bring him.'

The Prophet ﷺ then said, 'Someone like him cannot be ignorant of Islam! If he were to have reserved his ability to inflict damage and harshness for the cause of the Muslims, it would have been better for him. If he were to have come to us, we would certainly have honoured him, and preferred him over others.'

Catch up, dear brother, with all the good opportunities you have missed out on."

Khalid said, "When the letter reached me, I decided to go. It increased my interest in Islam. I was pleased that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had asked about me. I saw in a dream that I was in a restricted and barren land, which I then left for a green and vast land.

I said to myself, "This has to be a true dream."

When I finally prepared to go to the Messenger of Allah – may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, I thought to myself, 'Who can I accompany and go to the Messenger of Allah – may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him?" I then met Safwan bin Umayyah and said to him, "O Ibn Wahb, don't you realise what we are in? We are like molar teeth crushing against each other.

On the other hand, Muhammad seems to have overpowered the Arabs and the non-Arabs. If we were to join Muhammad and follow him, then surely, his honour would be our honour?"

However, Safwan strongly disagreed and said, "If there was none left but me, I would never follow him!" We then departed.

I said to myself, "This man has been hurt. His brother and father were killed at the battle of Badr."

I then met 'Ikrimah bin Abi Jahl and said to him what I had said to Safwan bin Umayyah, but he also said to me in response what Safwan bin Umayyah had said to me.

I then said to myself, "I will discreetly go to Muhammad without mentioning it to anyone."

Thus, I went to my house, took my ride and set off, until I met 'Uthman bin Talhah.

I said to myself, "He is a friend of mine. What if I tell him my plans?"

I then thought about the killing of his relatives in our wars against the Muslims, so I didn't want to remind him of that.

I then thought to myself, "It doesn't matter if I inform him, since I am leaving right now!"

So I mentioned to him what I thought had become of Quraysh. I said, "We are like a fox hiding in its burrow. If only a portion of water was poured into the burrow, it would come out." He hastily responded to me and decided to come with me to Madinah.

I said to him, "I actually decided to leave today for Madinah.

This is my ride, already prepared for me."

We then promised to meet up at a place called Ya'juj. If he were to reach their first, he would stay there and wait for me. If I were to reach there first, I would stay there and wait for him.

I then left my house in the last hours of the night, in fear that the Quraysh may find out about our departure. Hence, we met at Ya'juj before dawn and set off until we reached al-Hada to find 'Amr bin al-'Aas on his riding beast.

He said to us, "Welcome! Where are you headed?"

We said, "And what has made you come out?"

He asked us in reply, "Well, what has made you come out?"

"Our desire to enter into Islam and to follow Muhammad", we replied.

He said, "Well, this is also what made me leave."

Thus, we accompanied each other until we entered Madinah. We made our rides kneel down in a stony area. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was then informed about us. He became joyful upon hearing the news.

I then wore the best clothes I had and made my way to the Messenger of Allah – may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him. On my way, my brother met me and said, "Hurry up! For the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has been informed about you and he is very happy at your advent. He is waiting for you."

We began to walk fast. I saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and walked towards him. When he saw me from a distance, he smiled. He continued smiling at me until I finally reached him. I then

greeted him and he greeted me back very cheerfully.

I said, "I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship but Allah, and that you are the Messenger of Allah."

He said, 'Praise be to Allah Who has guided you. I always knew you were intelligent. I had always wished that your intelligence would lead you to your own good."

I said, "O Messenger of Allah, I know that I used to take part in all the hardships you had to endure, as I was stubbornly against the truth. Pray to Allah that He forgives me!"

The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Islam wipes out all that precedes it."

I said, "O Messenger of Allah, in that case, please, ask for my forgiveness."

He then prayed for me, "O Allah! Forgive Khalid bin al-Walid for all his wrongdoings, in diverting people away from Allah's path!'"

Thereafter, Khalid became one of the heads of this religion. Yet, his acceptance of Islam was due to an indirect message that reached him from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. How persevering and wise he was! Let us then adopt these skills in affecting people.

If you were to see a person selling cigarettes in his shop and you wanted to caution him, praise his shop and its cleanliness first, and pray for increased blessings in his profit. Then you should caution him with respect to earning halaal income, so that he realises that you did not look at him negatively. Rather, you held the stick from the middle.

Be clever! Look for whatever good you can find in a person in comparison to which his bad would seem insignificant. Think good of others, until they recognise your sense of justice towards them and love you more.

In brief…

When people realise that we pay attention to their good actions just as we pay attention to their bad actions, they appreciate our advice.

(34)

Make it easy to rectify a fault

Errors that people make vary. Some are huge while others are small. Irrespective of the magnitude of the errors, it is possible to rectify them all. Although, it might not be possible to completely rectify the bad consequences of an error, it is still possible to rectify a lot. Many people fail to rectify their faults since they doubt their own ability to rectify.

Sometimes, the way we deal with others' faults happens to be part of the fault itself. For instance, if my son were to err, I may blame and belittle him, and magnify his fault so much that he may start thinking that he has fallen into a well out of which there is no escape! Hence, he loses hope in any chance of rectification, and therefore remains at fault.

My wife may fall into an error, or my friend, and if you make him realise that he has indeed erred, but there is a way out, rectification is easy, and to return to the truth is better than persisting on falsehood, this would prove to be helpful in the rectification process.

A man came to the Prophet ﷺ to give him the oath of allegiance on migration. He said, "I have come to give you the oath of allegiance on migration, and I have left my parents weeping."

The Prophet ﷺ was neither harsh towards him, nor did he belittle his action, nor demean his intelligence. The man had come with good intentions, and thought that what he was doing was best. The Prophet ﷺ made him realise that it is easy to rectify a mistake, thus he said to him in simple words, "Go back to them and make them laugh the way you made them weep", and that was the end of the matter.

The Prophet ﷺ would deal with people in a manner that would encourage them to do good and make it easier for them, even if they were to make mistakes.

Here I present to you a painful incident. Although, the point behind this incident exists towards the end, I would still like to present the story from the beginning for our benefit. Whenever the Prophet ﷺ wanted to travel he would draw lots between his wives. Whoever won would accompany him in his travels. When he wanted to go on an expedition against Banu al-Mustaliq, he drew lots between his wives, which A'ishah won. Hence, she left with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and this was after the verses of Hijaab were revealed. She used to be carried in a howdaj. Whenever they stopped, she would leave the howdaj to fulfil her needs. Whenever they wanted to set off, she would return to the howdaj.

When the Prophet ﷺ was finished with his expedition, he began his return journey to Madinah. When he arrived closer to Madinah, he stopped at a place to spend some of the night, and then ordered the men to set off, once again.

The people then began to gather their belongings before they set off. Meanwhile, 'A'ishah –may Allah be pleased with her–

went away to fulfil some of her needs. She was wearing a necklace with Zafar beads, while she fulfilled her need, it slipped from her neck without her knowledge. When she went back to the camel and decided to enter the howdaj, she felt her neck but did not find the necklace, and the people were about to head out.

She quickly went back to the place where she had relieved herself and began to look for her necklace, and got delayed. The people came and carried her howdaj thinking that she was in it, and placed it on the camel. They then took the camel by the head and went off, as did the army.

As for 'A'ishah, after a long, tiring search she eventually found the necklace and came back to the place where the army had stopped.

'A'ishah said, "I came back to the place to find no one to call or to respond. The people had left. I then stayed where I was and thought that perhaps the people would miss me and come back to collect me. I then wrapped myself with my Jilbab.

As I was sitting, I was overcome by sleep, thus I slept. By Allah, I was lying down when Safwan bin al-Mu'attal passed by me. He was also left behind due to some of his needs, and so he did not spend the night with the people.

He noticed a human form, thus he came over to me and recognised me upon seeing me. He had seen me before the Hijaab was ordained for us. When he saw me he said, 'To Allah we belong and to Him we return! The wife of the Messenger of Allah – may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him!'

I woke up by hearing the words he uttered upon recognising me, so I covered my face with my Jilbab. By Allah, he did not speak

a word to me. I did not hear from him anything except those words he spoke at first. He came and his camel knelt down, trod upon its forelegs and I mounted it. He took the camel by its head and headed off to catch up with the people.

By Allah, we did not reach the people, nor did they discover that I was missing, until we reached the morning and we found them resting. Whilst they were at it, they saw a man, leading me on a camel. Thereupon, the slanderous people said what they said. The entire army was shaking by the news. By Allah, I had no knowledge of any of that.

We then reached Madinah and I became severely ill. Nothing had reached me still from what the people were saying. It did reach the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and my parents, but they would never even mention it to me in passing, except that I noticed that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was not showing me kindness. Usually, whenever I fell ill, he would have mercy on me and show me kindness. But this time he did not. Rather, if he visited me whilst I was in my mother's company who was looking after me, he would say, 'How is that lady?' and say no more. I felt this in my heart. When I noticed that he was distant from me, I said, 'O Messenger of Allah, do you give me permission to go to my mother so that she may nurse me?' He replied, 'No problem'. Thus I moved in with my mother, without having any knowledge of what was happening. I then recovered from my illness after twenty odd nights.

One night I decided to go out to fulfil some of my needs, along with Umm Mistah, the daughter of Abu Bakr's aunt, and as we were walking, she stumbled over her robe and fell, or was

about to.

She said, 'Let Mistah be ruined!'

I said, 'How bad is what you have said! You are cursing a man who witnessed the battle of Badr!'

She said, 'O you! Did you not hear what he has said? Hasn't the news reached you, O daughter of Abu Bakr?'

'What news?' I asked.

She then informed me what the slanderous people had been saying.

'Is this really the case?' I remarked.

'Yes, by Allah, it is!' she replied.

By Allah, I was not able to fulfil my need so I returned and became more ill. By Allah, I would not cease to cry until I thought that my weeping would split open my liver.

I said to my mother, 'May Allah forgive you! People are talking about all this, and you do not mention any of this to me.'

She said in reply, 'O my daughter! Do not worry about it. Very rarely do we find a beautiful woman married to a man who loves her, and that she has other co-wives, except that they all find faults with her, as do the people.'

I said, 'SubhanAllah! Have the people been speaking about this?' That night I cried until the morning. My tears did not stop, nor did I manage to sleep, until the morning broke whilst I was still weeping."

This was the situation with 'A'ishah. She was accused, whilst she was young and had not exceeded fifteen years of age. She

was being accused of fornication. Yet, she was a noble and chaste woman, a wife to the purest of all people, who never lifted her veil of dignity and never defiled her honour. But here she was, crying in her parents' house.

As for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, he too was full of grief and agony over 'A'ishah, for neither Jibril was sent, nor the Qur'an revealed to clarify the issue. He remained perplexed on this issue. The accusations coming from the hypocrites were too much to bear, as was the people's talk concerning his honour and that of his wife.

When the agony prolonged, the Prophet ﷺ stood up to address the people. He thanked and praised Allah, and then said, "O people! What is wrong with some people that they are hurting me with respect to my family? They are speaking falsehood about my family. By Allah, I have not known of them except good. They are talking similarly about a man, and by Allah, I have not known of him except good. He never entered any of my houses except that he was with me."

When the Prophet ﷺ said that, the leader of al-Aws tribe, Sa'd bin Mu'adh stood up and said, "O Messenger of Allah, if they are from al-Aws we will prevent them from harming you. And if they are from our brothers, al-Khazraj, then order us, for they are worthy of having their necks struck!"

When the leader of al-Khazraj tribe, Sa'd bin 'Ubadah heard this, he stood up. Even though he was a righteous man, he was overcome by zeal. He stood up and said, "I swear you have lied! Their necks would not be struck! By Allah, you only said this knowing that they are from al-Khazraj. If they were from your

tribe, you would not have said this!"

Usayd bin Khudayr said upon hearing this, "I swear you have lied! By Allah we will kill him! But you are a hypocrite, arguing on behalf of the hypocrites!"

The people then leapt towards each other and they were about to fight, whilst the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was still standing on his pulpit. He continued to calm them down until they finally became silent. The Prophet ﷺ, upon witnessing this, descended from the pulpit and entered his house.

When he realised that the situation could not be diffused by addressing the public, he turned to his family, and the most special people to him, to find a solution. Thus, he called 'Ali and Usamah bin Zayd to seek their advice.

Usamah praised 'A'ishah and said, "O Messenger of Allah! We do not know about your family except good. All of this is lies and falsehood."

'Ali said, "O Messenger of Allah, there are many women you can marry. You are always able to replace her. However, ask the slave girl, for she will speak the truth."

The Messenger of Allah then called Bareerah and asked, "O Bareerah! Did you notice anything suspicious about 'A'ishah?"

"Never! I swear by the one who sent you as a Prophet!" replied Bareerah, "By Allah, I do not know of her except good. I never noticed anything wrong with 'A'ishah, except that she is a young girl. I would make the dough and ask her to look after it, but she would fall asleep instead and leave the dough to be eaten by domestic goats."

How could the slave girl ever be suspicious of ‘A’ishah, for she was a righteous young woman who was brought up by the most truthful person of the Ummah, namely Abu Bakr, and was married to the best of mankind?

In fact, how could she ever be suspected of anything, whilst she was the most beloved of all to the Messenger of Allah? Surely, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would not love except good. Hence, she was completely innocent, yet, Allah decided to test her in order to increase her reward and exalt her fame.

Many days went by, as ‘A’ishah’s pain continued to increase, as she lay restless and bedridden due to her illness and did not look forward to eating or drinking.

The Prophet ﷺ tried to solve the problem by addressing the people, but it nearly turned into a war. He tried to solve the issue at home by asking ‘Ali and Zayd, but did not find a solution. At this stage, he wanted to end it with ‘A’ishah.

She said, “That day I cried unceasingly and could not sleep. I continued to cry for the next two days and could not sleep. My parents thought that my constant weeping would split my liver open.”

The Prophet ﷺ then headed for Abu Bakr’s house. He sought his permission and visited ‘A’ishah whilst she was with her parents and a woman from the Ansaar. This was the first time the Prophet ﷺ was entering Abu Bakr’s house since the people began to spread the rumour. He had not seen ‘A’ishah for a month, for he had been waiting for a month and nothing was revealed concerning ‘A’ishah.

The Prophet ﷺ entered upon ‘A’ishah to find her bedridden,

as if she were a young bird with its feathers plucked out, due to her constant weeping and agony.

She was crying, as was the woman next to her, not being able to control themselves, the Prophet ﷺ sat down, thanked and praised Allah, and said, "To proceed, O 'A'ishah, such-and-such has reached me concerning you," the Prophet ﷺ then mentioned the slander, and whatever had been said about her falling into a major error. He then wanted to explain to her that no matter what mistake a person falls into, it is not difficult to rectify it. He said to her, "If you are innocent, then Allah Almighty will declare your innocence. But if you have committed a sin, then ask Allah for forgiveness and repent to Him. For when a servant of Allah recognises his sins and repents, Allah accepts his repentance". Hence, he presented an easy way out of the mistake, if it really occurred, without complicating it further or prolonging the issue.

'A'ishah said, "When the Prophet ﷺ had finished his speech, my tears stopped and I waited for my parents to respond to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ on my behalf, but they did not respond.

I said to my father, 'Please respond to the Messenger of Allah about what he has said.'

He replied, 'By Allah, I do not know what to say to the Messenger of Allah!'

I then said to my mother, 'Please respond to the Messenger of Allah on my behalf!'

She said, 'By Allah, I do not know what to say to the Messenger of Allah!'

By Allah! I do not know of a family who were as distressed as the family of Abu Bakr at that time. When I realised that they were both unable to say a word on my behalf, I began to weep more.

I then said, 'Never! By Allah, I would never repent to Allah for what you have mentioned! By Allah, I now know that you have heard the rumours, they have settled in your heart and you have believed them. If I were to say to you that I am innocent – and Allah Almighty and Majestic knows that I am innocent – you would never believe me! But if I were to confess to something – even though Allah knows that I am innocent – you would believe me! By Allah, I cannot find of you and myself an example except that of Yusuf's father when he said, 'Patience is more fitting for me, and Allah is my Aide over that which you claim!'"

She said, "I then turned away and lay on my bed. By Allah, I knew that I was innocent and that Allah would also declare my innocence. However, by Allah, I could not have imagined that revelation would be sent down concerning me, which would be recited forever. I was not worthy that Allah should speak about my calamity in a recital. I was only wishing that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would see a dream in which Allah Almighty would declare me innocent.

But, by Allah, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not depart the sitting, nor did anyone leave the house, except that he was overcome by a state which he often became overcome with whilst receiving a revelation. Allah was revealing to His Prophet. As for me, then as I saw him receiving the revelation, by Allah I did not become afraid or worried, for I knew that I was innocent, and

that Allah would not wrong me.

As for my parents, then I swear by the One Who has the soul of 'A'ishah in His Hands, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ recovered, I thought that their souls would depart at any time in the fear that Allah confirms what the people had been saying. However, when the Prophet ﷺ recovered, he laughed and began to wipe the sweat of his face.

The first thing he said was, 'Glad tidings, O 'A'ishah! Allah has declared your innocence!'

I said, 'al-Hamdulillah!'

Allah had revealed, 'Lo! They who spread the slander are a gang among you. Deem it not a bad thing for you; nay, it is good for you. Unto every man of them (will be paid) that which he hath earned of the sin; and as for him among them who had the greater share therein, his will be an awful doom. Why did not the believers, men and women, when ye heard it, think good of their own folk, and say: It is a manifest untruth? Why did they not produce four witnesses? Since they produce not witnesses, they verily are liars in the sight of Allah.'

Allah further threatened them saying, 'Lo! Those who love that slander should be spread concerning those who believe, theirs will be a painful punishment in the world and the Hereafter. Allah knoweth. Ye know not.'"

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ went out to the people and addressed them reciting what Allah had revealed unto him from the Qur'an concerning this affair. He then punished those guilty of slander.

Hence, it is imperative that you deal with the one at fault as if he is a patient in need of treatment, not that you should exaggerate in condemning him and being harsh with him. This is because the wrongdoer might reach a stage where he begins to think that you are actually happy with his wrongdoing. A caring doctor is someone who cares for the patients' health more than they care for it themselves.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "The example of me and you is like that of a man who kindled a fire. Grasshoppers and butterflies start falling into the fire and the man continues protecting them against it. I am holding you back from falling into the fire and you are slipping out of my hands."

An opinion…

Sometimes, our method of rectifying an error happens to be a greater error than the error itself.

(35)

The other opinion

Just as people differ in nature and physique, they also differ in their views, persuasions and dealings. If you ever feel that someone has erred, then advise him and try to rectify his fault, but if he does not listen, do not then write him off as one of your enemies. Deal with situations optimistically, in accordance with your own ability.

If you were to attempt to rectify a fault in one of your friends, and he rejected your advice, do not turn friendship into enmity. Continue to be kind to him, in the hope that at least his fault would not increase.

It is said, "Have mercy! For some forms of evil are more bearable than others." If you deal with people cheerfully, you would not become angry over every small or great fault of theirs and live happily forever.

'A'ishah – may Allah be pleased with her – said, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ never sought revenge for himself. He never hit anyone with his hand, neither a woman nor a servant, unless while fighting in the cause of Allah. He was never harmed in regards to his person that he ever sought revenge from the one who harmed him, unless if one of God's sanctities were violated,

in which case, Allah would avenge him." (Muslim)

Therefore, no doubt the Prophet ﷺ would become angry, but his anger would be for Allah. He would not become angry for his own sake. In order to understand the difference between the two types of anger, suppose that your younger son came to you one morning and asked you for one or two Riyals to spend at school. You then look through your wallet only to find five hundred Riyal notes. You give it to him anyway, and say to him "This is a 500 riyal note. Only spend two riyals from it and bring the rest back." You remind him repeatedly to ensure that he remembers.

By the time he returns home after Dhuhr, you find that all the money has been spent. What do you do? How angry would you be? You may hit him, be harsh with him and deprive him of his pocket money for days to come. Yet, if you were to return from 'Asr one day, to find him playing games on the computer or watching television instead of praying in the mosque, would you then become as angry with him as you would in the former situation?

I think we would agree that the first instance of anger would be harsher, more prolonged and more effectual than the latter one.

However, the anger of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was solely for Allah. Often he would advise people but it would not be accepted from him, and thereupon, he would relax, for guidance is only in the hands of Allah.

The Prophet ﷺ approached Tabuk, on the borders of Syria, and came close to the boundaries of the Roman Empire. He

sent Dahiya al-Kalbi – may Allah be pleased with him – to Heraclius, the Emperor of Rome. Dahiya upon arriving entered into the presence of Heraclius and handed over to him the letter from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. When Heraclius saw the letter he called the priests and the patrician and closed the doors on himself and them for privacy. He said, "As you know, this man has appeared, and he has sent to me a letter calling me to accept one of the three points:

1) That I follow his religion, or;

2) Give him what we own on this land, whilst the land remains ours, or;

3) We go to war with him."

Heraclius then said, "By Allah, you already know from reading your books that he would surely take our lands. Why don't we just follow his religion? Or, give him our wealth and keep our lands?"

When the priests heard this and realised that he was asking them to leave their religion, they became angry, raised their voices and removed their gowns. Meaning, their gowns dropped due to the severity of their anger and upheaval.

They said, "Are you calling us to leave Christianity, or that we should be slaves to a Bedouin who has come to us from Hijaz?" Heraclius stood aghast. He realised that he had surely got himself in trouble by making this suggestion. The priests used to enjoy great authority and popular support amongst the people, thus, Heraclius feared that if they left him now in this state, they would turn the entire empire of Rome against him. He began to calm them down and said, "I only asked you this to test your

firmness on your religion."

Heraclius knew that the Prophet ﷺ was the Messenger that Jesus had foretold. But he still wanted to confirm his supposition. Heraclius called a person from the Arab tribe called Tajib. They were Christian Arabs.

Heraclius said to him, "Call a person from amongst you, a fluent Arabic speaker who can memorise words. Send him to this man [Muhammad ﷺ] with my response to his letter."

The man from Tajib went and brought a person from Banu Tanukh, who were also Christian Arabs. Heraclius gave the letter to the man from Tanukh to deliver it to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said, "Deliver my letter to this man, and as you speak to him, look out for three things:

1)Does he mention the letter he wrote to me?

2)When he reads my reply, does he mention the night?

3)Notice his back, is there anything particularly noticeable or it?

Al-Tanukhi then set off, leaving Syria until he reached Tabuk, to find the Messenger of Allah ﷺ sitting on the ground with his Companions. Al-Tanukhi came to them and said, "Where is your companion?"

Someone said, "There he is."

Al-Tanukhi walked up to him, sat in front of him and handed over to him Heraclius's letter.

The Prophet ﷺ took the letter and placed it on his lap. He then said, "Where are you from?"

The man replied, "I am the brother of Tanukh."

The Prophet ﷺ then said, "Would you like to embrace Islam, the monotheistic religion, the religion of your father Ibrahim?" The Prophet ﷺ was very eager for this person to embrace Islam.

In actuality, there was nothing preventing the man from Tanukh from embracing the truth, except his zeal for his people's religion!

Al-Tanukhi said quite frankly, "I am a messenger from a people, on the religion of my people. I would not leave my religion until I return to my people."

When the Prophet ﷺ noticed his zeal, he did not become angry and cause problems for him. He only laughed and said, "You cannot guide those whom you love. Only Allah guides those who He wills, and He is surely most aware of the guided ones."

The Prophet ﷺ then said very calmly, "O brother of Tanukh! I wrote a letter to Caesar, but he tore it up, and Allah is going to tear him up and his kingdom. I wrote a letter to the Negus, and he burnt it, and Allah is going to burn his kingdom. I also wrote a letter to the man you are coming from, and he held on to it. The people will continue to find him troublesome for so long as there is good in life."

Al-Tanukhi remembered Heraclius's request and said to himself, "This is one of the three things he asked me to take note of." He feared that he may forget, so he took an arrow from his quiver and made a note of it on the side of his sword.

The Prophet ﷺ then gave the letter to a man sitting on his left. Al-Tanukhi said, "Who amongst you writes and reads let-

ters?"

Some people said, "Mu'awiyyah."

Mu'awiyyah began to read to find that Heraclius had written to the Prophet ﷺ, "You call me to Paradise as wide as the heavens and the earth, which has been prepared for the pious ones. Where then is the hellfire?"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "SubhanAllah! Where is the night when the morning has come?"

Al-Tanukhi realised that this was the second thing Heraclius asked to take note of. He took an arrow from his quiver and made a note of it on his sword.

When Mu'awiyyah had finished reading the letter, the Prophet ﷺ turned to al-Tanukhi, the man who did not take the Prophet's advice by not embracing Islam, and said to him with all kindness, "You have rights, for you are a messenger. If you see anything you would like to take as a gift, we would grant it to you. But we happen to be travellers sitting on sand!" Meaning, I wish I could give you a gift, but as you see, we are travelling and sitting on sand!

'Uthman – may Allah be pleased with him – said, "I will give him something, O Messenger of Allah!" 'Uthman got up and unpacked the side of his saddle and returned with a robe and a garment and placed it in al-Tanukhi's lap.

Then the noble Prophet ﷺ said, "Which one of you would like to take this man?" meaning, which one of you would like to host him.

"I will," a young man from the Ansaar replied.

The Ansaari got up to leave and al-Tanukhi followed him,

whilst he was still thinking of the third thing Heraclius asked him to notice, i.e. the seal of Prophethood between the shoulders of the Prophet ﷺ. Al-Tanukhi had only walked a few steps that suddenly he heard the Prophet ﷺ call out to him, "Come here, O brother of Tanukh!" Al-Tanukhi turned around and rushed back to the Prophet ﷺ until he was standing in front of him.

The Prophet ﷺ then untied the knot and dropped his garment from his back to reveal his back to al-Tanukhi and said, "Here you go! Take note of what you were ordered to take note of."

Al-Tanukhi said, "I looked at his back and noticed a seal between his shoulders, which looked quite large." (Musnad Ahmad. Ibn Kathir commented that the chain of this narration is not bad.)

A thought…

The objective is to make the people realise their faults. It is not necessary that they should correct themselves in your presence, so do not be frustrated.

(36)

Respond to mistreatment with kindness

Most commonly when you deal with people, they treat you how they want to treat you, and not how you want to be treated. Not everyone you meet with cheerfulness is cheerful to you in return. Some of them may even become angry, think badly of you and ask, "What are you laughing at?"

Not everyone you present a gift returns your favour. You may give gifts to some people only to find them backbiting you in various gatherings, and accusing you of being foolish and wasting money!

Not everyone you are kind to in speech or praise generously or use kind words with responds to you in kind. Allah has divided up manners for people, just as He has divided up their sustenance. The divine way to deal with the people dictates: "The good deed and the evil deed are not alike. Repel the evil deed with one which is better, then lo! He, between whom and you there was enmity (will become) as though he was a bosom friend."

Some people have no solution to their problems and nor is there a way to reform them. You can only deal with them in accordance with their own wishes. In that case, you can either have

patience with them, or leave them.

It is mentioned that a man once travelled with a businessman. This man would do all the work while travelling, such as serving his companion, offloading the luggage and feeding the camels, until he would become exhausted.

On the way back, the two of them stopped to have their meal. They made their camels kneel and dismounted. The man laid down outstretched on the ground while his businessman companion laid out a sheet, offloaded the luggage, and then turned to him and said, "Why don't you gather the wood while I cut the meat?"

He replied, "By Allah, I am very tired after riding the camel all this time!"

The businessman then stood and gathered the wood, and said, "Can you make fire?"

He replied, "The smoke stings me if I come near it", so the man lit the fire himself.

The busineesman then said, "Can you please help me in cutting the meat?"

He replied, "I fear that I may cut my hand", hence, the man cut the meat himself.

The businessman then said, "Could you put the meat in the pan and cook the meal?"

He replied, "It is very tiring for me to watch the meal before it is properly cooked". The businessman then began to cook himself.

When he finally finished cooking and felt very tired, he lay down on the ground, and said, "Could you please lay out the dining mat, and pour the meal out onto the plates?"

He replied, "I am feeling really heavy, and I don't have the energy to do that right now." The businessman then got up, prepared the meal and laid it out on the mat.

The businessman said, "Would you come over and eat?"

He replied, "By Allah, I feel very embarrassed at constantly making excuses, so I shall relent this time!" He then got up and ate the meal!

You might meet people who are like him. Do not be saddened by this. Rather, be firm like a mountain.

Our model educator, the Prophet ﷺ ,would deal with people rationally and not emotionally. He would bear other people's mistakes and still be gentle with them.

Just imagine! There he was, sitting in a blessed gathering, surrounded by his companions, and in came a Bedouin asking him for his help with paying off blood-money. This man – or an acquaintance of his – had killed someone, and so he wanted the Prophet ﷺ to help him financially to enable him to pay the blood-money to the victim's family.

The Prophet ﷺ then gave him something and enquired out of kindness, "Have I been good to you?"

The Bedouin said, "No! You have neither been good nor courteous!"

Upon hearing this, some Muslims became angry and were about to fight him, but the Prophet ﷺ signalled to them not to.

The Prophet ﷺ then walked towards his house, called the Bedouin and said, "You came to us, asked for our help, and we helped you. But then you said to us what you said."

Then the Prophet ﷺ gave him more of what he could find in his house and said, "Have I been good to you?"

The Bedouin said, "Yes! May Allah reward you in your family and your kinsfolk."

The Prophet ﷺ was delighted to know that the Bedouin was pleased, but he was afraid that his Companions might still have hatred towards him, or that one of them may see him in the street and show his resentment towards the Bedouin. Thus, he wanted to remove this feeling from their hearts.

He said to the Bedouin, "You came to us for help and we gave it to you, but then you said what you said. My Companions are resentful towards you for this reason. If you were to go to them now and say to them what you have said to me now, perhaps this feeling would be removed from their hearts."

When the Bedouin came, the Prophet ﷺ said, "This friend of ours came to us for help and we gave it to him, but then he said what he said. We then called him over and gave him more, and now he says that he is pleased."

He then turned to the Bedouin and said, "Isn't that so?"

The Bedouin replied, "Yes! May Allah reward you in your family and your kin."

When the Bedouin decided to leave and go to his family, the Prophet ﷺ decided to give his Companions a lesson in how to win people's hearts. He said to them, "The example of me with

this Bedouin is like that of a man whose camel runs away from him. A group of people then chase after the camel, as it runs away from them being frightened. They only manage to make it flee further. So the camel's owner finally says, 'Leave me alone with the camel! I am gentler with it and I know how it thinks!' The camel's owner then grabs some fallen dates from the ground and calls it until it finally comes to him. He then ties the saddle around it and mounts. If I were to have obeyed you when he said what he said, he would have entered the fire of Hell." Meaning, if you were to have made him flee, he might have left the religion and entered the fire of Hell. (Narrated by al-Bazzar with a disputed chain)

Gentleness only beautifies an action while harshness only serves to tarnish it. "The good deed and the evil deed are not alike. Repel the evil deed with one which is better, then lo! He between whom and you there was enmity (will become) as though he was a bosom friend."

It is mentioned that when the Prophet ﷺ conquered Makkah, and began to circumambulate the Ka'bah, there came Fadhalah bin 'Umayr – a person who pretended to be a Muslim – and began to make Tawaaf behind the Prophet ﷺ waiting for an opportunity to kill him by surprise. When he came close to the Prophet ﷺ, he became aware of him. He turned around and said to him, "Are you Fadhalah?"

He replied, "Yes, I am Fadhalah, O Messenger of Allah!"

The Prophet ﷺ asked, "What were you thinking of doing?"

He replied, "Nothing! I was only remembering Allah!"

The Prophet ﷺ then laughed and said, "I seek Allah's forgive-

ness."

Fadhalah later said about this incident: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ then placed his hand over my chest, and my heart came to rest. By Allah, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not lift his hand from my chest except that Allah had placed in my heart the strongest love for him."

Fadhalah headed to his family and passed by a woman he would sit and chat with. When she saw him, she said, "Why don't you come over for a chat?"

He replied, "No."

She insisted, "Come over for a chat."

"No," Fadhala said, "Allah and Islam forbid you from it.

'If you were to see Muhammad and his party victorious the day the idols were smashed

'You would have witnessed Allah's religion become manifest

As polytheism became engulfed with darkness.'

Thereafter, Fadhalah became one of the righteous Muslims.

The Prophet ﷺ used to capture people's hearts by forgiving them. He would bear their harms in order to change them and bring them closer to what was good for them.

Abu Talib would frequently protect the Prophet ﷺ from the harms of the Quraysh. After Abu Talib passed away, the Quraysh increased its pressure on the Prophet ﷺ. He was harmed the way he was never harmed whilst his uncle was alive.

The Prophet ﷺ began to consider another source of refuge, aid and support. He left for Ta'if in order to seek the support and

assistance of the tribe of Thaqif. He entered Ta'if and proceeded to meet three men who were the leaders and the noblest men of Thaqif. They were three brothers; 'Abd Yalayl bin 'Amr, and his brothers Mas'ud and Habib.

The Prophet ﷺ sat with them and called them to Allah. He asked them to help him in championing the cause of Islam and to stand by him against those who oppose him from his own people. However, their response was disgraceful!

One of them said, "I would tear down the covering of Ka'bah if Allah has really sent you!"

The other mocked, "Didn't Allah find anyone else to send?"

The third person thought about what his response should be. He wanted his words to be more malicious than that of his brothers.

He said, "By Allah, I will never respond to you! If you really are the Messenger of Allah as you claim, then you are too dangerous to be responded to! If you are lying upon Allah, then I should never speak to you!"

The Prophet ﷺ then stood up to leave after feeling disappointed by the best people from Thaqif. He also feared that the Quraysh may find out that Thaqif had rejected him, and subsequently begin to harm him more.

Thus he said to them, "Whatever you do, please keep this meeting a secret."

But they did not. Instead, they incited the slaves and the foolish against him, until they began to follow him to hurl curses and abuse at him.

They gathered along his path in two lines and the Prophet ﷺ was walking very quickly in between to save himself. Each time he raised a leg to move forward, they would stone him. All the while he quickened his pace, trying to avoid the stones being flung at him. His noble feet began to bleed profusely. He was a middle aged man, over forty years old. He moved away from them and kept walking until he found a safe place where he could rest under the shade of a date palm tree. At this time, he was overcome with the thought of going back and facing the Quraysh. How could he enter Makkah?

He looked up to the sky and said, "O Allah! I complain to You of my weakness, my scarcity of resources and the humiliation I have been subjected to by the people.

'O Most Merciful of those who are merciful! O Lord of the weak and my Lord too! To whom have you entrusted me? To a distant person, who receives me with hostility? Or to an enemy, to whom you have granted authority over my affair?

'So long as You are not angry with me, I do not care. Your favour is of a more expansive relief to me. I seek refuge in the light of Your Face by which all darkness is dispelled and every affair of this world and the next is set aright, lest Your anger or Your displeasure descends upon me. I desire Your pleasure and satisfaction until You are pleased. There is no power and no might except by You."

As he sat there in this state, there came a cloud that overshadowed him. He lifted his gaze to the sky to find Jibril therein. Jibril called out to the Prophet ﷺ, "O Muhammad! Allah has heard what your people have said to you, and how they dealt with you.

He has sent to you the Angel of Mountains at your disposal so you may order him with whatever you wish."

Before the Prophet ﷺ could say a word, the Angel of mountains called out to him saying, "May Allah's peace be upon you, O Messenger of Allah! O Muhammad! Allah has heard what the people have said to you. I am the Angel of Mountains. Your Lord has sent me to you, so you may order me with whatever you wish."

Before the Prophet ﷺ could say a word or make a choice, the Angel of Mountains began making suggestions to him, saying, "If you wish, I could crush them between the two mountains." He was referring to the two mountains on either side of Makkah.

The Angel of Mountains then waited for an order.

"Rather," said the Prophet ﷺ, trampling over his own wishes and the desire for revenge, "I will be patient with them, for I hope that Allah will raise from their progeny those who will worship Him alone without associating any partners with Him."

Be brave…

The relationship between me and my brothers

And my cousins is indeed problematic

If they consume my flesh, I spare theirs

If they destroy my honour, I build theirs

They do not hurry to my aid

But I hurry if they call me to theirs

I do not hold grudges against them

For the leader never bears grudges

(37)

Convince him of his error so he may accept advice

Some people tend to engage others uselessly by offering excessive unsolicited advice and remarks, which may be solely based on their personal liking.

For instance, after attending a wedding party that you and your wife had planned and organised, an invitee complains to you, "Dear brother, the wedding party was not very appropriate. You tired yourself in vain. I was under the impression that the party would be of a higher standard."

"How so?" you ask, civilly.

He says, "Dear brother, most of the meat was fried. I personally prefer boiled meat. The salad was sour due to too much lemon, not exactly to my taste. The sweets were all decorated with cream, which made them repulsive."

He then says, "Generally, most of the people disliked the food. They only ate out of courtesy, or because they had no choice!"

No doubt, you would despise this adviser and avoid him. You would never accept his counsel, because it is only based on personal taste!

You can say the same about someone who advises the next person quite harshly about how to deal with his children, his

wife, or how he should have had his house built, or the kind of car he should have bought, purely based on his own personal preferences and opinions.

Always beware that you do not base your advice on your personal preferences. Yes, if someone asks your opinion, do share it with him. But to speak to him as you would advise a person who has erred, then certainly not. Perhaps the one given advice does not feel that he has erred. Therefore, if you are to offer your advice, you must make sure that your argument is strong while advising him aptly.

A Bedouin once sat with a group of righteous people, as they spoke about kindness to parents. While the Bedouin sat and listened, one of them turned to him and said, "O so-and-so! How are you with your mother?"

The Bedouin replied, "I am kind to her."

He said, "What do you do to show your kindness to her?"

The Bedouin replied, "By Allah! I never hit her with a stick!"

Meaning, if he ever wanted to hit her, he would hit her either with his hand or his turban, but not with a stick out of his extreme kindness towards her! The poor man had no idea about right and wrong. So be soft and kind so that the one you are addressing may be convinced of his mistake.

At the time of the Prophet ﷺ, there was a woman who would borrow items from other women and forget to return them. Upon being reminded, she would deny that she had ever borrowed anything. This continued until it became unbearable and the people complained to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who

decreed that her hand be cut off. However, it became agonising for the Quraysh that her hand be severed whilst she was from one of their greatest tribes. They decided to speak to the Prophet ﷺ in order to lighten the sentence by giving her another punishment, such as lashing or a fine, etc. Each time a person came to discuss with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about this issue, he returned unsuccessfully.

They decided that no one would dare to speak to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ except Usamah bin Zayd, the most beloved person to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the son of the most beloved to him, for both he and his father were brought up in the house of the Prophet ﷺ, such that he considered them his sons. Thus, they spoke to Usamah.

Usamah came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Prophet welcomed him and sat with him. Usamah began to speak to the Prophet ﷺ about lightening the sentence. He argued that the woman was from the most noble of people. Usamah continued to speak as the Prophet ﷺ listened, trying to convince the Prophet ﷺ of his view.

The Prophet ﷺ looked at Usamah as he was discussing and debating with all conviction, not knowing that what he was asking for was actually not possible!

The Prophet's complexion changed and he became angry. The first thing he did was to explain to him his error, saying "Are you interceding with me to violate one of the legal punishments of Allah?" He was explaining the reason behind his anger towards Usamah, and that none may intercede with regards to Allah's legal punishments which He has obligated upon His

servants to implement.

Usamah realised his mistake and immediately said to the Prophet ﷺ, "Seek forgiveness for me, O Messenger of Allah!"

When the evening came, the Prophet ﷺ stood up and addressed the people. He praised Allah as He should be praised and said, "To proceed, the people before you were only destroyed because when a noble person from amongst them stole, they left him, and when a weak person stole, they implemented the legal punishment on him. I swear by the One who has my soul in His Hand, if Fatimah the daughter of Muhammad were to steal, I would cut off her hand!"

He then ordered that the woman's hand be cut off.

'A'ishah – may Allah be pleased with her – said of this woman, "She sincerely repented thereafter and got married. She used to come to me and I would speak to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about her needs." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Usamah bin Zayd – may Allah be pleased with him – had various moments with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and all of them are full of examples of mercy and gentle ways of dealing.

Usamah said, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ dispatched us to al-Huraqat, a sub-tribe of Juhaynah, so we defeated them and pursued them in their trails. A man from the Ansaar and I came across a man from amongst them. Upon seeing us, he hid behind a tree. When we caught up with him and raised a sword to strike him with, he said, 'There is no one worthy of worship but Allah!'

"My colleague lowered his sword, but I thought the man was

only saying it out of his fear of the sword. Thus, I attacked and killed him. But then, I felt uneasy about it in my heart. So I came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and informed him of what had happened.

"He said to me, 'He said, 'There is no one worthy of worship but Allah,' then you killed him?'

"I said, 'He did not say it willingly. He only said it out of fear of our weapons'

"But the Prophet ﷺ repeated his question, 'Did he say, 'There is no god worthy of worship but Allah,' and you then killed him? Did you cut open his heart to know for certain that he only said it out of his fear of your weapons?!'"

Usamah remained silent, for he obviously did not cut open his heart. But it was still in the battlefield, and the man he killed was, indeed, a warrior.

Still, the Prophet ﷺ kept repeating the criticism, "Did he say 'There is no god but Allah', and then you killed him?"

"O Usamah! You killed a man after he had said, 'There is no god but Allah!' How would you deal with this testimony – 'There is no god but Allah' – on the Day of Resurrection?!"

"He continued to repeat himself until I wished I had only accepted Islam that day", said Usamah. (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Contemplate on how he gradually explained to him his fault, convinced him thereof, and then admonished and advised him. In order to convince the one you are advising, try to debate his thoughts and principles however much you can. Try to think from his view point.

Once, while the Prophet ﷺ was sitting in his blessed gathering, surrounded by his immaculate Companions, there came a young man into the mosque and began to look right and left as if he was looking for someone. His eyes fell on the Prophet ﷺ so he walked towards him.

It was assumed that the young man would sit in the circle and listen to Allah's remembrance. But he did not. The man simply looked at the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the Companions around him, and said with all boldness, "O Messenger of Allah! Allow me to…" seek knowledge? No. This is not what he said. If only he had said that! Nor did he say, "Allow me to make Jihad". If only he had said that.

Do you know what he said?

He said, "O Messenger of Allah! Allow me to fornicate."

How astonishing! He asked such a question so frankly!

"Allow me to fornicate!"

The Prophet ﷺ looked at the young man. Although, it was possible for him to admonish him by reciting Qur'anic verses, or advising him briefly with words that may move his heart, he chose to take a different route.

He said to him gently, "Would you like anyone to fornicate with your mother?"

The young man shook as he thought of someone fornicating with his mother and said, "No. I would never like that for my mother."

The Prophet ﷺ then said to him gently, "Likewise, the people would not like it for their mothers either." He then asked him,

"Would you like it for your sister?"

The young man was shaken again as he thought of his chaste sister fornicating and instantly said, "No. I would never like it for my sister."

The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Similarly, the people would not like it for their sisters." He then asked him, "Would you like it for your paternal aunt? Would you like it for your maternal aunt?"

The young man kept saying, "No… No…"

The Prophet ﷺ then said to him, "Then love for the people what you love for yourself, and dislike for the people what you dislike for yourself."

The young man then realised he was wrong and said with all humility, "O Messenger of Allah! Pray to Allah to cleanse my heart!"

The Prophet ﷺ then called him, and the young man walked towards him and sat down in front of him. The Prophet ﷺ placed his hand on his chest and said, "O Allah! Guide his heart, forgive his sins, and guard his chastity."

The young man then left saying, "By Allah, I went to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ while fornication was the most beloved action to me. But as I left his company, fornication was the most hateful action to me."

Also, take note of his tender treatment when he called him, placed his hand on his chest and prayed for him. He used all possible means to rectify the person he was dealing with. This was after convincing him of the repulsiveness of the action, so that when he abandoned the action, he did so out of his own

conviction, and therefore never performed that evil action, either in his presence or absence.

Rule…

If the wrongdoer realises the despicableness of his wrongdoing, he inevitably becomes convinced that he is in need of advice. He therefore becomes more receptive to, and more convinced of the advice being given.

(38)

Do not criticise me! End of story?

Some people think that by criticising others over microscopic faults, they are somehow getting closer to them, or strengthening their own personality.

The truth is that a constant barrage of absolute criticism does not prove your shrewdness. On the contrary, your ability to avoid it as much as possible and endeavour to correct people in ways that do not cause them hurt or embarrassment is the indication of an astute person.

There are cases in which it is preferable you remain oblivious, especially when they involve worldly issues and personal rights.

The leader of a people is not the one who is foolish

The leader of a people is the one who pretends to be foolish

The one who is criticised views criticisms as sharp arrows directed towards him, because he feels he is deficient. This is the first point.

The second point is to try to avoid as much as you can advising someone in public:

Advise me in private freely

But do spare me of your advice in public

For the advice given in public is a form of rebuke I do not like to hear

When a mistake becomes widespread and you feel compelled to advise a person publicly, then adhere to the principle: "What is wrong with the people that they do such and such?", as we have already explained.

A criticism is like a whip which the critic uses to lash someone's back. Some people repel others either by the excessiveness of their criticisms, or by criticising bygone things where their criticisms do not rectify any wrongdoing or achieve any objective.

The plight of a poor man who had left his land for another country to work as a truck driver comes to mind. One day, he was very tired, but he managed to force himself to sit in the truck and drive it a long way between two cities. On the way, he was overtaken by slumber. He tried to fight off sleep and accelerated a little. He overtook a car in front of him without paying full attention, only to encounter another small car heading towards him with three passengers.

He tried to steer away but could not and collided into the car head on. There was a lot of dust and smoke at the scene, and the passersby began to stop their cars to witness the accident. The truck driver came out and looked at the car, then looked at the passengers to find them all dead.

The people took the passengers out of the car and called an

ambulance. The truck driver sat there waiting for the ambulances to arrive. He began to think about what might happen to him from imprisonment or having to pay blood-money. He began to think about his young children and his wife. Poor man! His worries heaped onto him like a mountain.

The people began to verbally attack him as they passed by. Astonishing! Was this the time to heap criticism on the poor fellow? Could it not have been delayed a little, until the driver came out of his shock?

One of them said, "Why do you drive fast? This is the result of speeding!"

The other said, "I have no doubt you were sleepy, and despite that you continued driving! Why didn't you stop the car and sleep?"

Yet a third person said, "People like you should never be given a driving license!"

People were making these comments very harshly, screaming violently.

All the while, the man was sitting silently on a rock with his head in his hands, and suddenly, he fell to his side – dead. They killed him by the spontaneity and ruthlessness of their criticisms. If only they had waited a little, it would have been better for him and them.

Place yourself in the shoes of the one who is criticised, the one who is wrong, and think from his point of view. If you were to be in his place, you would probably make a mistake bigger than his.

The Prophet ﷺ was always conscious of this.

When the Prophet ﷺ with his Companions departed from Khaybar, they travelled for a long time until they became tired. When evening approached, they stopped at a place to sleep. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Who would make sure that we wake up for Fajr so we may sleep in peace?" Bilal – may Allah be pleased with him – who was very eager, said, "I shall wake you up, O Messenger of Allah!"

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ then lied down, as did the people and they all fell asleep. Bilal stood up and prayed until he became tired, since he too was tired due to the long journey. He sat down and leant against his camel to rest. As the time for Fajr began to enter, his eyelids felt heavier and heavier till he slipped into a slumber.

They were all very tired, hence they all overslept. Night passed and morning came, whilst they all remained asleep, and were only awoken by the heat of the sun.

The Prophet ﷺ woke up, and so did the people. When they saw the sun they became confused and clamorous. Everyone by now was looking at Bilal.

The Prophet ﷺ looked at Bilal and said, "What have you done to us, O Bilal?"

In response, Bilal said briefly, yet explaining what precisely happened, "O Messenger of Allah! My soul was taken by the One Who took your soul." Meaning, I am a human being. I tried to ward off sleep but I wasn't able to. I was overtaken by sleep just as the rest of you were!

The Prophet ﷺ said, "You have spoken the truth", and remained silent. What would the benefit have been in blaming anyone?

When the Prophet ﷺ saw that the people were confused, he said to them, "Let's embark!' They all set off. He then walked for a while and stopped by a place as they all did. They all made ablution for prayer, and the Prophet ﷺ led the people in prayer. After concluding the prayer, the Prophet ﷺ turned to the people and said, "If you ever forget to pray then pray as soon as you remember."

How excellent he was! How wise he was!

He served as a learning centre for every leader, unlike some modern-day leaders who rarely avoid blaming and scolding. The Prophet ﷺ would place himself in the shoes of those under him, and think from their perspective. He would deal with the hearts, before dealing with the bodies. He knew that they were merely human beings and not machines!

In the 9th year of Hijrah, Rome amassed an army and began to approach from the direction of Syria in order to fight the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions; although it is also said that the Prophet ﷺ amassed an army himself to initiate a fight with them.

So the Prophet ﷺ began to prepare an army. He incited the people until he managed to gather three thousand fighters. They were then equipped with whatever weaponry and provision that was available.

The Prophet ﷺ said to them, "Your leader is Zayd bin Harith-

ah. If Zayd is struck, then Ja'far bin Abi Talib will lead, and if Ja'far is struck, then 'Abdullah bin Rawahah."

The Prophet ﷺ went out with them in order to bid farewell to the army. So did the people, who said to the army, "May Allah be your companion! May He defend you and return you to us safe!"

'Abdullah bin Rawahah was yearning for martyrdom and to that end he recited his poems.

The army then headed for the battle of Mu'tah, until they stopped over a place called Ma'aan, in Syria. There the news reached them that Heraclius the Emperor of Rome had stopped over in Syria with 100,000 Roman troops, and that a further 100,000 of tribal warriors had joined him, making them 200,000 strong altogether.

When the Muslims ascertained the news, they stayed over two nights at Ma'aan considering the right course of action. Some of them said, "We should write to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ informing him of the numbers of our enemy. He would either send us reinforcements or order us with something else, and we will do as he wishes."

When too many people began offering their opinions, 'Abdullah bin Rawahah stood up and said, "O people! What you dislike is what you have come out to seek – martyrdom in the path of Allah, yet you are fleeing from it! We do not fight the people with might or numbers. We do not fight them, except with the aid of this religion that Allah has blessed us with. So let us march forth! For there can only be two positive outcomes: either victory or martyrdom!"

Hence, the people marched forth, until they approached the Roman Army at a place called Mu'tah, only to find them in great numbers, beyond anyone's military might.

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه said, "I witnessed the day of Mu'tah. When we came close to the pagans, we saw what no one could ever overcome, in terms of number, weaponry, beasts, ornaments, silk and gold. My eyes glistened.

"Thabit bin Arqam said to me, 'You did not witness Badr with us. We do not win by our numbers.'"

Then the armies met and fought. Zayd bin Harithah fought with the flag of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ until his body was sliced by numerous spears, due to which he was slain and martyred – may Allah be pleased with him.

Ja'far then took the flag with all his valour and attacked the enemy on his fair-haired horse. He took the flag in his right hand until it was cut off. He then took the flag by his left hand until it too was severed. He then embraced the flag, holding it with his upper arms until he was killed. He was only thirty-three years old.

Ibn 'Umar said, "I came across Ja'far's body that day, and counted fifty stab wounds and cuts, not one of which were on his back. Allah recompensed him for that with two wings in Paradise with which he may fly wherever he wishes. He was also struck by a Roman soldier who cut him in two halves with a sword."

When Ja'far was killed, 'Abdullah bin Rawahah took up the flag and moved forward on his horse, but slightly hesitated to advance towards the enemies, and said:

"O soul! I have sworn that you will fight!

You will fight, or you will be forced to fight!

When people have assembled and shouted the war cry,

Why do I see you hating to enter Paradise?"

As he then dismounted from his horse, his cousin came to him with a meaty bone, saying, "Have some of this, for you have suffered much these days." He took it and ate a little, then heard a noise coming from a certain direction. He looked at the bone he was eating and said, "You are still engaged in this world!" He threw down the bone, took his sword, pressed forward and fought until he was killed – may Allah be pleased with him. The flag fell once again and the Muslims became confused, whilst the disbelievers rejoiced. All the while, the flag was being trampled all over under the dust.

Suddenly, there came the brave Companion, Thabit bin Arqam and he raised the flag once again and shouted, "O Muslims! I have the flag! Choose your leader!"

They shouted back at him, "You be the leader!"

"I will not!" replied Thabit.

They then suggested Khalid bin al-Walid, and when he took the flag, he fought fiercely, so much so that he would say afterwards, "Nine swords were broken in my hand on the day of Mu'tah, until nothing was left in my hand except a Yemeni sword."

Khalid then withdrew with the army into their camps, as did the Romans. Khalid also feared returning to Madinah with the army the same night, in case the Romans followed them. Hence,

when they woke up, Khalid changed the positions of the army by switching the rear division with the front, and right flank with the left.

When the battle commenced and the Romans came forth, every division from them noticed new flags and banners amongst the Muslims and new faces. They became confused and said, "Perhaps, they received reinforcements last night", and became panic-stricken.

The Muslims managed to kill a great number of them, whilst only twelve men were killed from amongst the Muslims. Khalid then retreated with the army by the evening and continued his way back to Madinah. When they arrived in Madinah, they saw the children racing towards them. When the women met them, they began to throw dust in the face of the army saying, "You fleers! Do you run away while fighting in the path of Allah?"

When the Prophet ﷺ heard this, since he knew that they had no choice and did all they could, he said in their defence, "They do not run away! They will turn around and attack, if Allah wills!" This was the end of the matter for him. Surely, they were all brave men who did not fall short of their duty, but they were still human beings, and what they were faced with was beyond their strength. This was the end of the matter and therefore, there was no benefit left in criticism. This was always the method of the Prophet ﷺ.

When the disbelievers heard that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was heading towards Makkah with his army for a conquest, they became terrified. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent to them a man who would announce to all the Makkans:

- Whoever enters his home and closes his door shall be safe.
- Whoever enters the Mosque shall be safe.
- Whoever enters the house of Abu Sufyan shall be safe.

The people began to flee from the Prophet ﷺ.

Meanwhile, some of the horsemen of Quraysh gathered together in order to fight, but their people refused. A group of them decided to meet at a place called al-Khandamah. They were: Safwan bin Umayyah, 'Ikrimah bin Abi Jahl, Suhayl bin 'Amr and others who had gathered together at al-Khandamah to fight.

Hamas bin Qays was actually preparing his weapon before the Prophet ﷺ made his way to Makkah. When his wife noticed, she said, "Why are you preparing your weapons?"

He replied, "For Muhammad and his Companions!"

His wife was aware of the Muslim might, so she said, "By Allah! I do not see anything withstanding Muhammad and his Companions!"

He replied, "By Allah! I hope that I will bring one of them for your service one day", meaning he would capture some of them and bring them to her as servants.

He then left for the place called al-Khandamah where his companions had gathered, only to encounter the Muslims being led by the sword of Allah, Khalid bin al-Walid. The fighting commenced, the brave men attacked and in just a matter of a few moments, more than twelve or thirteen disbelievers were killed.

When Hamas bin Qays saw this, he turned to Safwan and

'Ikrimah and saw them run away to their homes. He caught up with them and headed for his home.

Upon reaching home, he screamed at his wife with fear, "Please shut the door on me! They are saying whoever enters his home and closes his door shall be safe!"

She said in response, "What happened to all that you said? That you would destroy them, and bring some of them to me as servants?"

He said,

"If you were to witness the day of al-Khandamah

When Safwan as well as Ikrimah fled

When we faced the Muslim swords

As they cut our every limb and flesh

Striking us, and you hear nothing but the sound of killing,

You would not have uttered a word in criticism."

That's right! If only his wife had seen the suffering he had witnessed, she would not have uttered a word of criticism.

On another occasion, when the Prophet ﷺ entered Makkah during the conquest, he was aware of the greatness of the Holy City, and therefore, only fought very little. He then said, "Allah has made this land sacred the day He created the heavens and the earth. He only gave me the allowance to fight for one hour in the day."

It was said to him, "O Messenger of Allah! Are you forbidding us from killing? Khalid bin al-Walid in his division is killing whoever he meets from the pagans."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Get up, O so-and-so, and go to Khalid bin al-Walid and tell him to keep his hands up with regards to killing."

This man obviously realised that they were in the middle of a war, and that the Prophet ﷺ had ordered the Quraysh to stay in their homes so they would not be killed. This implied that whoever was not in his home deserved to be fought.

Hence, he understood from the Prophet's statement, "Keep his hands up with regards to killing", to mean that he should kill anyone who stands in his way, and keep his hands raised from killing when he is not able to find anyone to kill!

Thus, the man came to Khalid and said, "O Khalid! The Messenger of Allah ﷺ says: Kill whoever you can!" Khalid, therefore, ended up killing seventy men.

A man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, "O Messenger of Allah! Khalid is killing!" Upon hearing this, the Prophet ﷺ became surprised and thought about how he could kill after he had been forbidden. He immediately sent for Khalid. When Khalid came to him, he said, "Did I not forbid you from killing?"

Khalid became surprised and said, "O Messenger of Allah! So-and-so came to me and ordered me to kill whoever I can!" The Prophet ﷺ then sent for that man. When he arrived, the Prophet ﷺ said, "Did I not say he must raise his hands regarding killing?" The man instantly realised his fault, but it was too late.

He said, "O Messenger of Allah! You willed something. Allah willed something else and Allah's will overpowered yours. I could not do more than what I did." The Prophet ﷺ remained silent

and did not reply.

Whoever contemplates over different situations in life finds it very evident that sometimes a person does the very best he could but his efforts do not reap the desired outcome.

Once I sat with a youth in his car and noted that his driving skills were excellent. I also knew that he was involved in an accident a week earlier. I asked him, "I notice that your driving skills are very good. Why then did you have an accident a week ago?"

He said, "Well, I had to!"

I said, "That's strange!"

He said, "Yes, I had to. Do you know why?"

I said, "Why?"

He said, "I was driving up a bridge and I was speeding. When I began to drive down the bridge, I suddenly noticed the cars in front of me were all at a standstill. I had no idea what the reason was, an accident or a check point, I had no idea.

"But I was taken by surprise. There were four lanes in front of me and all four of them were full of cars. I had the choice of steering away from them all and falling off the bridge, or putting my foot down on the brakes and letting the car play with me as it wants, or the third choice, which was the easiest of them all..."

"Which was?" I asked.

"To crash into one of the four cars in front of me!"

I laughed and said, "I see! So what did you do then?"

He said, "I slowed down as much as I could, choose the cheapest car in front of me and smashed into it!"

He then laughed as did I, but I thought about what he had said, and thought that perhaps he did not deserve much criticism, because his choices were limited. Some problems simply do not have a solution. If a person's father happens to be very bigoted, he tries to advise him using all means, and if he does not listen, what more can he do?

A suggestion

Put yourself in the shoes of the one criticised and think from his perspective. Only then pass a judgement on him.

(39)

Verify the fault before criticising

It was clear by the tone of his voice when he rang me that he was angry, but he was trying his best to conceal his anger. This was not the tone I was used to hear from Fahd. I noticed that he was holding something against me.

He began to talk about the many trials people have to face nowadays. Then his tone became harsher and he began to repeat, "You are a preacher, a student of knowledge, and your actions will be accounted for…"

I said to him, "Dear Abu 'Abdullah, would you like to speak about the issue upfront?"

He said, "Well, you gave a lecture at such-and-such a place where you said, such and such."

I became amazed and asked, "When was this?"

"About three weeks ago", he answered.

I said, "I have not been to that area for about a year."

He said, "No, you have! And you spoke about this!"

It then became clear to me that my friend heard a rumour and he believed it, and on that basis he formulated his advice, his stance and his words. No doubt I still love him but my respect for

him has decreased, because I discovered that he is too hasty.

How many are those who draw a conclusion or form views based on a rumour they may hear! Many of them come to advise you only to discover that they were following hearsay. Many of them allow these rumours to become imprinted in their hearts and on that basis they paint a picture of you, which happens to be false.

Sometimes it becomes widespread that so-and-so did such-and-such. In order to preserve the respect he has for you, verify the news before speaking to him, and this was the methodology of the Prophet ﷺ.

A man came to the Prophet ﷺ and the Prophet looked at him only to notice a man in a shabby state, his hair covered in dust. The Prophet ﷺ wanted to advise him to improve his appearance, but he feared that the person might be a pauper who had no money.

So he asked him, "Do you have any wealth?"

The man said, "Yes, I do."

The Prophet said, "What sort of wealth?"

The man said, "All sorts of wealth: camels, slaves, horses, cattle, etc."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "If Allah has given you wealth, then let it be shown on your person."

Then he said, "Does your camel give birth to young ones with sound ears, but you get hold of a blade and cut off the ears and call it Baheerah? And do you cut a bit of it, or cut its skin and call it Sarm, thereby making it forbidden for yourselves and

your family?"

The man said, "Yes."

The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Verily, what Allah has given you is Halaal. Allah's blade is the sharpest!" (al-Hakim who declared it Sahih)

In the Year of Delegations, some envoys came to the Prophet ﷺ having accepted Islam to give the pledge of allegiance to him, whilst others came to him as disbelievers in order to accept Islam or to make pacts. One day, as the Prophet ﷺ sat amongst his Companions, there came a delegation from al-Sadif. There were about ten of them. They headed for the Prophet's gathering and sat down without giving salutations.

The Prophet asked them, "Are you Muslims?"

They said, "Yes".

The Prophet said, "Why did you not give salutations?"

They stood up and said, "Peace from Allah be upon you, O Prophet, and His mercy and blessings!"

He replied, "Peace be to you, too! Please be seated!" They then sat down and asked him about the prayer times.

During 'Umar's era, Islamic lands had expanded, so he appointed Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas as an Amir over Kufa. The people of Kufa at the time were wreaking havoc against their leaders. A group of them sent a letter to 'Umar – may Allah be pleased with him – complaining about Sa'd. In the letter they mentioned many faults, even claiming that he did not pray well!

When 'Umar read the letter, he did not hastily make a deci-

sion or write a letter of advice. Instead, he sent Muhammad bin Maslamah to Kufa with a letter for Sa'd. He also ordered him to accompany Sa'd and to ask the people about his dealings.

Muhammad bin Maslamah arrived in Kufa and informed Sa'd of the news. He then began to pray in the various mosques with Sa'd and started to ask the people about his dealings.

He did not leave a mosque except that he asked about Sa'd, and the people never mentioned him with anything but good. This was the case until they entered one of the mosques of Banu 'Abs, where Muhammad bin Maslamah stood up and asked the people about their leader, Sa'd. They all spoke in praise of him.

Muhammad then said, "I ask you in the name of Allah, do you know anything else about him?"

They said, "No, we do not know anything but good."

When Muhammad repeated the question, there rose a man at the end of the mosque. His name was Usamah bin Qatadah. He said, "If you have asked us in the name of Allah, then listen to what I have to say. Sa'd neither treats us fairly, nor is he just in disputations."

Sa'd became surprised and said, "Am I like this?!"

The man said, "Yes."

Sa'd then said, "By Allah, I pray to Allah for three things. O Allah, if this servant of Yours is a liar, and he has only stood up to show off, then prolong his life, extend his poverty, and give him tribulations in life!"

Then Sa'd left the mosque and headed towards the city, and after several years he passed away. But as for the man, the prayer

of Sa'd never left him. He became aged, his bones became weak and his back became crooked. His life became so long that he tired of it. His poverty became so severe that he would sit on the streets, begging people for money. His eyebrows hung over his eyes due to old age. Whenever women passed by him, he would stretch out his hands to harass them. As a result, people used to scream at him and insult him, to which he would respond by saying, "What else can I do? I am a trial-stricken old man, who has been afflicted with the prayer of a righteous man, Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas."

Hadith…

It is a bad premise for a man to make assertions.

It is enough of a sin for a person to speak whatever he hears.

(40)

Whip me gently!

What has preceded does not mean that we should not criticise at all. Often it is required to criticise others, including your son, wife or friend. It is, however, possible to delay your criticisms slightly or to use subtle tactics. Let him retain some of his honour.

After the Prophet ﷺ conquered Makkah, he became well-respected amongst the Arabs, and people began to enter into Islam in multitudes. The Prophet ﷺ then decided to lead an expedition to Hunayn. The pagan army arrived in its best form and began to line up. The horses lined up first, then the foot soldiers, then the women, then the cattle followed by grazing livestock. The Muslims were great in number that day; twelve thousand altogether. The pagans had reached the valley of Hunayn before the Muslims and managed to conceal some of their units in both sides of the valley behind rocks.

When the battle started, the Muslim troops began to enter the valley and as they did, the disbelievers started to attack them from all angles with stones and arrows. The people became confused and the Muslim horsemen began to retreat. The first people to flee from the battle were the Bedouins. The disbelievers gained an upper hand and prevailed.

The Prophet ﷺ turned around and saw the troops fleeing, blood flowing, and horses colliding into each other. He ordered 'Abbas to call out, "O Muhajirun! O Ansaar!" Upon hearing the call, they returned and the Prophet ﷺ managed to stand his ground with eighty or a hundred men, until Allah gave them victory and the battle came to an end.

When the war booty was collected and brought to the Prophet ﷺ, those who fled from the battle in fear of spears and arrows were the first ones to come to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ wanting a share of the booty. The Bedouins persistedly demanded of the Prophet ﷺ saying, "Give us our share of the booty! Give us our share of the booty!"

How strange! Your share of the booty? Since when do you have a share in it if you did not even fight? How can you ask for a share in the booty when he was calling out to you and you were not responding? However, the Prophet ﷺ wouldn't scrutinise such issues, for the world did not mean anything to him.

They began to follow him and kept repeating, "Give us our share!" They gathered around him, thereby restricting his path forcing him into the trees. Due to overcrowding, he was brushing against the trees as he walked, and in the process his cloak got stuck in a branch and fell off his shoulders exposing his stomach and back.

But the Prophet ﷺ did not become angry. He only turned to them and gently said, "O People! Please hand me my cloak. I swear by the One Who has my soul in His Hand, if I had livestock as many as the trees of Tihamah, I would have distributed it amongst you and then you would have known that I am neither

miserly, nor cowardly, nor a liar."

Surely, if he was a miser he would have kept everything for himself. If he was a coward he would have fled. If he was a liar, the Lord of the Worlds would not have aided him.

The Prophet ﷺ had many such great moments. Once he was walking along with some of his Companions as they passed by a woman crying over the grave of her child.

The Prophet ﷺ said to her, "Fear Allah and have patience."

The woman was crying and overwhelmed with grief and did not recognise the Prophet ﷺ. So she said, "Leave me alone! What do you care about my calamity?"

The Prophet ﷺ remained silent and simply walked away from her. He had conveyed to her what he had to and had realised that the woman was not in a state to receive advice more than what she had heard. Some of the Companions turned to her and said, "This is the Messenger of Allah!"

The woman felt remorse over what she said. She got up to look for the Prophet ﷺ and reached his home. She found no one at the door so she sought permission to enter and said, "O Messenger of Allah! I did not know it was you. I will have patience now."

He replied, "Patience is to be observed at the moment a calamity strikes." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Kill gently…

"Verily, Allah has enjoined excellence with regard to every-

thing. So, when you kill, kill in a good way; when you slaughter, slaughter in a good way; so every one of you should sharpen his knife, and let the slaughtered animal die comfortably."

(41)

Run away from problems!

I think if he were to go for a medical examination in a hospital, he would have discovered ten different types of diseases in his body, the least serious of which would be high blood pressure and diabetes.

This poor person used to torture himself because he used to demand perfection from others. You would always find him frustrated with his wife, because she broke a new plate, forgot to clean the lounge or burnt his new garments with the iron.

As for his children, Khalid still hasn't memorised his timetables, and Sa'd has not yet achieved an A grade. Sarah and Hind also have their own problems. This is his how he is at home.

As for with his friends, for even worse, he thinks to himself, "Abu 'Abdullah intended me when he related the story of a stingy person! Yesterday, Abu Muhammad was talking about me when speaking about old cars. He was referring to my car! I know because he was looking at me." Such thoughts occupy the mind of this poor person all the time."

An old adage says, "Either the times obey you, or you obey the times."

I remember that a Bedouin, from amongst my friends, used

to repeat this maxim he had learnt from his grandfather whenever I would speak to him philosophically. He would take a deep breath and say, "O Shaykh! The hand you cannot twist, you must shake!"

If you think about it, you will find that this saying is correct. For if we do not get used to tolerance and letting things go, or in other words, pretending not to notice and not drowning ourselves in what other people mean or think, we would find our lives very difficult.

The leader of a people is not the one who is foolish

The leader of a people is the one who pretends to be foolish

A young man once came to his Shaykh to ask his help in choosing a wife who would be his life-partner.

The Shaykh said, "What are the qualities you want in your wife?"

He replied, "She has to be good looking, tall, with lustrous hair and a beautiful scent. She should cook delicious food and talk sweetly. Someone when I look at her, she pleases me, and when I am away, she safeguards herself in my absence. She should not disobey me, and I shouldn't have to fear her evil. She must also take pride in religion and enjoy wisdom."

The man continued to mention all the good qualities in women that he would like to see in that one woman. When the Shaykh thought he had heard too much, he said to the man, "My son, I know a person who fits the description."

He replied, "Where?"

The Shaykh said, "In Paradise, with the permission of Allah. As for this world, then you must learn to be tolerant!"

Yes! You must learn to be tolerant in this world. Do not torture yourself by looking for problems and arguments, so one day you scream in the face of someone sitting next to you, "You are talking about me, aren't you?" or to your son, "You want to upset me by being lazy!" or your wife, "You deliberately do not give the house due attention?"

The Prophet's method in general was to be tolerant. That way he used to enjoy his life. Sometimes, he would go to his family in the morning, whilst feeling hungry. He would ask them, "Do you have anything to eat?"

They would say, "No."

He would say, "In that case, I will fast."

He didn't use to cause problems due to that. He didn't use to say, "Why don't you cook something? Why don't you tell me so I can buy it for you?" Rather, he would say, "In that case, I am fasting", and that would be the end of the matter.

He would deal with everyone in a very tolerant fashion.

Kulthum bin al-Husayb was one of the best the Companions. He said, "I went out on the expedition of Tabuk with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and one night I was travelling with him through the valley of al-Akhdar."

Kulthum then mentioned the rest of the story where they walked for quite long, until sleep began to overcome him, and as they rode, his camel kept getting closer to the Prophet's camel. Upon noticing, he would suddenly wake up and pull his camel

away fearing his camel's saddle may brush against the Prophet's foot. At one point, he was overcome by sleep, and his camel collided into the Prophet's camel, and his saddle brushed against the Prophet's foot. The Prophet ﷺ felt the pain and let out a sigh. Kulthum woke up upon hearing the sigh and became embarrassed and said, "O Messenger of Allah! Ask Allah for my forgiveness!"

The Prophet ﷺ demonstrated tolerance and said, "Carry on… Carry on…"

Yes, this was all he said. He didn't turn it into a scene, saying "Why did you collide into me? The path is spacious! Why are you riding next to me, anyway?" No. He did not trouble himself. It was just a hit on the leg, and that was it.

This was always his way of dealing with things.

Once he was sitting with his Companions and there came a woman with a cloak.

She said, "O Messenger of Allah! I wove it by my hands for you to wear."

The Prophet ﷺ took it, as he was in need of it. He got up, left for his house, wore it as a lower garment and came out to his Companions.

A man from amongst the people said, "O Messenger of Allah! Please, allow me to wear it!"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Certainly," and instantly returned home, took it off and folded it up, wore his old lower garment and sent the new one to the man.

The people said to the man, "What you did was not right!

You asked him for it, knowing that he never refuses whoever asks him for anything!"

The man said, "By Allah, I did not ask him except that it should be my burial shroud the day I die."

When the man died, his family shrouded him in that garment. (al-Bukhari)

How beautifully were people affected by this treatment!

Once, the Prophet ﷺ led his Companions in 'Isha prayer. Meanwhile, two children entered the mosque, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, the two sons of Fatimah. They headed straight for their grandfather, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ while he was praying. Whenever he prostrated, al-Hasan and al-Husayn would jump on his back. When he wanted to raise his head, he would gently grab them, take them off his back and make them both sit next to him. When he returned to prostrate, they would jump back on his back. When he finished his prayer, he took them both gently and sat them on his thigh. Abu Hurayrah – may Allah be pleased with him – then got up and said, "O Messenger of Allah! Shall I take them back?" meaning, shall I return them to their mother? But the Prophet ﷺ was in no hurry to return them. He remained for a while until he saw lightning and heard thunder from the sky. He then said to them both, "Go back to your mother." The two children then left and went back to their mother. (Narrated by Ahmad. Al-Haythami said, 'the narrators are trustworthy')

On a different occasion, the Prophet ﷺ went out with his Companions to either pray Dhuhr or 'Asr, while he was holding al-Hasan or al-Husayn. He walked to the place of prayer, sat the child down and initiated the prayer by saying the Takbeer. When

the Prophet ﷺ fell into prostration, he stayed there longer than usual such that the Companions thought that perhaps something might have happened to him. He then raised his head from prostration.

After the prayer was concluded, his Companions asked him, "O Messenger of Allah! In this prayer you prostrated the way you never have before. Is there anything you were ordered with by Allah? Or were you receiving revelation?"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "It was none of that. But my son was riding on my back and I disliked that I should take him off so quickly, so I waited until he had finished." (al-Hakim in al-Mustadrak, classified Sahih)

He once visited Umm Hani bint Abi Talib – may Allah be pleased with her – whilst he was hungry.

He said, "Do you have any food I can eat?"

She replied, "Nothing but dry bread, and I am too embarrassed to give it to you."

He said, "Bring it."

She brought it, broke it into pieces in water, and brought some salt and spread it all over it. The Prophet ﷺ began to eat this bread soaked with water. He then turned to Umm Hani and said, "Do you have anything to be eaten with bread?"

She said, "I do not have anything, O Messenger of Allah, except some vinegar."

He said, "Bring it."

She brought it and poured it over his food, and the Prophet

ﷺ ate from it. He then thanked Allah and said, "How good is vinegar with bread!"

Yes, he used to live his life as it was, and accepted the reality as it was.

On his journey to Hajj, the Prophet ﷺ set out with his Companions and stopped over somewhere. The Prophet ﷺ went away to relieve himself, then came to a pool of water to make ablution from after which he got up and prayed.

There came Jabir bin 'Abdullah – may Allah be pleased with him – and he stood to the left of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, said the Takbeer and initiated his prayer with him. Thereupon, the Prophet ﷺ took him by his hand and gently moved him to his right, and they both continued with the prayer.

There also came Jabbar bin Sakhr – may Allah be pleased with him. He made ablution, and stood to the left of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ took the two by their hands gently and pushed them slightly back until they were praying behind him. (al-Bukhari)

One day, whilst the Prophet ﷺ was sitting down, there came to him Umm Qays bint Muhsin with her newborn in order that the Prophet would chew some date and rub therewith the soft palate of the child for blessings (Tahnik), and pray for him.

The Prophet ﷺ took him and placed him on his lap. It was not long before the baby urinated in the lap of the Prophet ﷺ and made his garment wet. All the Prophet did then was to call for some water and spray over the affected area of his garment, and that was the end of the matter. (al-Bukhari)

He did not become angry or frown. So why should we torture ourselves by making a mountain out of a molehill? Not everything that happens to you must be to your liking 100%.

Some people cannot control their nerves and magnify the situation, including some parents and teachers.

Do not search for hidden faults. Be open to accept others' excuses, especially those who make excuses in order to preserve their good relations with you, and not for some personal gain.

Look at the Prophet ﷺ! He climbed the pulpit one day, and addressed his Companions in such a loud voice that even the young women were able to hear him inside their homes!

Do you know what he said in the sermon?

He said, "O you who have believed with your tongues, yet faith has not entered your hearts! Do not backbite the Muslims! Do not search for their faults! For the one who searches for the faults of his brother, Allah seeks out his faults. And whoever Allah seeks out the faults of, He exposes him, even if he is hidden away in the depths of his house!" (al-Tirmidhi, Hasan)

Yes, you should not hunt for mistakes and seek out faults. Be tolerant. The Prophet ﷺ was always very eager not to initiate problems.

Once in a serene gathering of the Prophet ﷺ with his Companions, where souls were purified and hearts were made tranquil, he said to his Companions, "Let not one of you convey to me something bad about one of my Companions, for I love to meet you all with a clean heart."

Do not torture yourself…

Do not gather dust upon yourself when the dust is settled…

But when the dust has risen, then cover your nose with your sleeve and continue to enjoy your life…

(42)

Admit your faults and do not be arrogant…

Many problems that cause enmity to continue for a year or two years, or perhaps for life, can easily be solved by one person saying to another, "I made a mistake. I am sorry."

"Yes, I did not make it to the appointment."

"Yes, I made a bad joke."

"Yes, I said hurtful things."

Be quick to put out the fire before it is set ablaze. Say, "I am sorry. I owe you an apology." You would only feel better after apologising.

There occurred an argument between Abu Dharr and Bilal – may Allah be pleased with them both – and even though they were both Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, they were still human.

During the argument, Abu Dharr became angry and said to Bilal, "O son of a black woman!" Thereupon, Bilal complained to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ called Abu Dharr and said, "Did you insult Bilal?"

He replied, "Yes."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Did you mention his mother?"

He replied, "When someone is insulted, usually his father and mother are also mentioned, O Messenger of Allah!"

The Prophet ﷺ replied, "You are a man with traits of pre-Islamic ignorance."

He asked, "Even when I am this old?"

The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Yes."

The Prophet ﷺ then taught him the manner in which he should deal with those who may be seen as below his social status, saying, "They are only your brothers. Allah has placed them in your care. And whoever Allah places in one's care then let him feed him with what he eats himself, clothe him with what he clothes himself. Let him not overburden him with that which he cannot bear. And if he does overburden him, then let him lend him a hand."

What did Abu Dharr do then?

Abu Dharr went to see Bilal and apologised. He sat on the ground in front of Bilal and he became closer to the ground until he rested his cheek on the dust, and said, "O Bilal! Put your foot on my cheek!" (Muslim)

This is how eager the Companions were to set out the flames of enmity before they became strong, and even if they became strong, they would do their best to prevent them from spreading.

A disagreement took place between Abu Bakr and 'Umar, where Abu Bakr made 'Umar angry. 'Umar went away from Abu Bakr in a state of anger. When Abu Bakr saw this, he regretted it and feared that the situation may exacerbate. Thus he went after

'Umar saying, "Forgive me, O 'Umar!" But 'Umar refused to turn to him.

Abu Bakr kept apologising and following 'Umar until he reached his home and shut the door in Abu Bakr's face. Upon this, Abu Bakr went to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. When the Prophet ﷺ saw him coming from afar, he noticed something different about him and said, "This Companion of ours seems to be in trouble."

Abu Bakr sat down quietly, and it wasn't long until 'Umar also regretted his mistake. May Allah be pleased with them all! How pure were their hearts!

'Umar headed to the Prophet's gathering, greeted everyone and sat down next to the Prophet ﷺ and told him the story, along with how he turned away from Abu Bakr and did not accept his apology.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ became angry. When Abu Bakr saw his anger, he began to say, "By Allah, O Messenger of Allah! This is only because I was the wrongdoer. I was the wrongdoer!" He began to defend and make excuses for 'Umar.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Will you leave my Companion alone? Will you leave my Companion alone? When I said, 'O people! I am the Messenger of Allah to you all', all of you said, 'You have lied!' yet Abu Bakr said, 'You have spoken the truth!'" (al-Bukhari)

Be careful not to be from those who rectify others while corrupting their own souls. Such people go around in circles with their faults like a donkey going around a mill.

Hence, if you ever are in a position to advise others or be

an example to them, such as a teacher with his students, a father or a mother with his or her children, then think as if you are under the watch of your customers. Everyone is monitoring you. Always discipline yourself as much as possible. The same applies to a couple dealing with each other.

Once, 'Umar – may Allah be pleased with him – distributed clothes to people. Everyone received a piece of cloth that would have sufficed him either as an upper or lower garment. 'Umar then stood up to address the people on Friday, and said in the beginning, "Surely, Allah has ordered you to hear and obey…"

As he said that, there rose a man from amongst the people and said, "There is no hearing, nor obedience!"

'Umar said, "Why is that?"

He replied, "Because you gave us all one garment each, while you yourself wear two new garments!" meaning, your upper and lower garment, as we can notice they are new.

'Umar then turned to the congregation as though looking for someone, until he found his son 'Abdullah bin 'Umar. He said, "Stand up, O 'Abdullah bin 'Umar!" He stood up.

He said, "Did you not give me your garment so I may deliver my address to the people therein?"

He replied, "Yes."

Then the man sat down and said, "Now we shall hear and we shall obey." and that was the end of the matter.

Although I agree that the manner in which the man objected to 'Umar was inappropriate, our amazement is over 'Umar's ability to understand the situation and extinguish the flames of

trouble.

Lastly, if you would like others to accept your comments or advice, no matter who they may be, your wife, son or your sister, then be receptive to advice yourself without being arrogant.

A man is always saying to his wife, "Look after the children better… Cook good food… How long have I been telling you to sort out the bedroom?" She would always respond gently, "Alright, Allah willing, I will do as you say."

One day she suggests piece of advice for him, "The children are having their exams nowadays and they need you to be present, so please don't be late if you go out with your friends."

The man merely hears these words and shouts at her, "I don't have time for them! And whether or not I am late, what has that got to do with you? This is none of your business!"

Tell me, in the name of Allah, why you expect her to accept your advice after this?

And lastly, the clever person is the one who seals the holes in his wall so the people are not able to glance inside. Meaning, do not give people the opportunity to doubt you.

I recall that once a Da'wah organisation invited a group of preachers to deliver lectures in Albania. The president of all the Albanian Da'wah centres was also present. We looked at him and noticed that he did not have a single strand of hair on his cheek! We looked at each other in amazement, for it is common for a preacher to abide by the practices of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ by growing his beard, even if it is light. How can a leader of preachers be clean-shaven?

When the conference started, he said to us jokingly, "Dear all! I am naturally beardless. My beard simply does not grow. Do not arrange a whole lecture about me after we have finished!" We smiled and thanked him.

If you will, let us travel back in time to Madinah and look at the Messenger of Allah ﷺ while he was making I'tikaaf in his mosque in one of the nights of Ramadan. There came his wife, Safiyyah bint Huyay, to visit him and stayed with him for a while. She then rose to go back to her house. The Prophet ﷺ did not like for her to go back home in the darkness of the night, so he decided to go with her. He walked some of the way with her until two men from the Ansaar passed by him.

When they saw the Prophet ﷺ with a woman they began to walk fast. Upon seeing this, the Prophet ﷺ said to them, "Take your time! She is only Safiyyah bint Huyay."

They said, "SubhanAllah!" meaning, does it make sense that we should assume that you are walking with a strange woman?

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Indeed, the devil flows through the human being like blood in the veins. I feared that he may place evil in your hearts, or may whisper something to you…" (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Bravery…

Bravery is not to persist in your errors, but to acknowledge that you are wrong, and not to repeat the error again.

(43)

The keys to mistakes…

Dealing with mistakes is an art. Every door has a key, and all hearts have ways to them.

When a person falls into a huge error and news of it spreads amongst the people and they start to monitor what he would do next, get them busy with something else, so you may acquire enough time to think over the situation, to make sure no one else has the audacity to make the same mistake, and so that people do not become accustomed to this type of error.

The Prophet ﷺ marched forth with his companions on the expedition of Banu al-Mustaliq. On their way back, they stopped over to rest. Meanwhile, the Muhajirun sent a boy called Jahjah bin Mas'ud to fetch some water from the well, whilst the Ansaar also sent a boy called Sinan bin Wabar al-Juhani to fetch water for them. The two boys started to fight over water, and one of them kicked the other on the back.

Al-Juhani cried out, 'O Ansaar!'

Jahjah also cried out, 'O Muhajirun!'

The Ansaar rushed to the scene as did the Muhajirun and began to quarrel. They had just come from a battle and were still carrying their weapons!

The Prophet ﷺ went out to them and settled the dispute. But then trouble arose. 'Abdullah bin Ubayy bin Salul, who was the leader of the hypocrites, became angry. There were a group of Ansaar with him.

He said, "Did they really do this? They have turned against us and outnumbered us in our own land! As they say: If you fatten your dog, it will eat you, and if you starve it, it would chase you!" Then the wretched person said, "By Allah! When we return to Madinah, the most honourable will expel the meanest out of Madinah!"

He then turned to those who were present with him and said, "This is what you have done to yourselves. You have given them your land and your property! By Allah! If only you were to keep what you have instead of giving it to them, they would go to a different city!" This evil man continued to threaten and make promises, whilst those around him from the hypocrites showed their agreement and began to encourage him more.

In the same gathering, there was a small boy called Zayd bin Arqam. He went to the Prophet ﷺ and told him the news. 'Umar bin al-Khattab at the time was sitting next to the Prophet ﷺ. Upon hearing this he became enraged and said, "How dare this hypocrite speak about the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in this despicable manner!"

'Umar viewed that killing the viper is better than cutting off its tail. He saw that killing Ibn Salul would nip the discord in the bud. However, he should only be killed by a person from his own people, from the Ansaar, for that would have been safer than for him to be killed by a Muhajir.

'Umar said, "O Messenger of Allah! Order 'Ubbad bin Bishr al-Ansari to kill him!"

However, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was wiser. He realised that they had just returned from a battle and the people were still carrying their weapons. People were overwhelmed. It was not appropriate to create more disorder.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "What would we do, O 'Umar, when people start saying that Muhammad kills his own Companions? No, O 'Umar! Order the people to depart!"

The people had just stopped over and sat in the shade. How could the Prophet ﷺ order them to depart in the severe heat of the sun? It was never the habit of the Prophet ﷺ to depart in severe heat. But the people departed, anyway. Meanwhile, it reached 'Abdullah bin Salul that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had been informed by Zayd bin Arqam of what he heard from him. So he went to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and began to swear by Allah that he didn't say or speak a word. But the young boy belied him. Ibn Salul was the leader of his people and held in great esteem.

An Ansari said, "O Messenger of Allah! Perhaps the young boy misheard and does not remember what the man said." They began to defend Ibn Salul, but the Prophet ﷺ kept moving forward on his camel without paying attention to anyone.

Then one of the leaders of Ansar, Usayd bin Hudhyar came to the Prophet ﷺ, greeted him and said, "O Messenger of Allah! By Allah you have decided to depart at a wrong time! You never set off in such conditions!"

The Prophet ﷺ turned to him and said, "Has it not reached

you what your Companion has said?"

He said, "Which companion, O Messenger of Allah?"

The Prophet said, "Abdullah bin Ubayy".

"What did he say?" He asked.

The Prophet said, "He claims that when he returns to Madinah, the most honourable one would expel the meanest."

Usayd upon hearing this became enraged and said, "In that case, you, O Messenger of Allah, would expel him if you like! He is, by Allah, the mean person and you are honourable!"

Then Usayd attempted to lighten the Prophet's mood and said, "O Messenger of Allah! Be gentle with him. When Allah brought you to us, his people were decorating the pearls to crown him. He now sees that you have usurped his kingdom."

The Prophet ﷺ kept silent and carried on with the journey, whilst some people were still collecting their belongings and others were mounting their rides. The news began to spread until it became the subject of discussion amongst the entire army.

"Why are we setting off at this time? What did he say? How should we deal with him? Ibn Salul spoke the truth! No he lied!" were the rumours spreading among the people like Chinese whispers.

The army was left confused as they were on their way back from the battle. Moreover some hostile tribes lay in wait for them. The Prophet ﷺ felt that the army was about to divide, thus he decided to keep them busy with something else to divert their attention away from the crisis or argumentation, as they continued to inflame the matter and create trouble between the

Muhajirin and the Ansar. The people began to wait for the moment they would stop over, get together and discuss the matter. Thus, the Prophet ﷺ continued to march with the army for the whole day in the sun. He continued until the sun set and the people thought that now they would stop over to pray and rest. But the Prophet ﷺ stopped over very briefly, during which they prayed and then moved on again.

They continued with their journey throughout the night until they reached the next morning. He stopped over to pray the Fajr prayer and ordered everyone to continue with the journey. They continued to walk the entire morning until they became exhausted and irritated by the sun. When the Prophet ﷺ realised that they were completely exhausted and tired such that they were unable to speak, he ordered them to stop over. They had only touched the ground when they all fell asleep. The Prophet ﷺ had done this to divert their attention away from the crisis. He then woke them up and continued on the journey until they entered Madinah. The people dispersed and went to their families.

Allah then revealed Surat al-Munafiqoon:

"Those are they who say, 'spend not on those who are with the Messenger of Allah until they disperse! where as the treasures of the heavens and the earth are only for Allah, but the hypocrites understand not. They say, 'if we return to Madinah, the one most honourable will surely expel therefrom the one most mean, whereas the honour is for Allah, and His Messenger and the Muslims, but the hypocrites know not."

The Prophet ﷺ recited the verses, then took the young boy, Zayd bin Arqam by his ears and said, "He is the one who fulfilled

his trust to Allah by his ears."

The people then began to insult and blame Ibn Salul. At this point, the Prophet ﷺ turned to 'Umar and said, "Do you see, O 'Umar? If I were to have killed him on the day you suggested, many would have come to his defence. If today you were to ask me to kill him, I would have killed him." The Prophet ﷺ then remained silent and didn't say anything further.

Sometimes, if a person makes a mistake publicly, then you may need to criticise him for it but in an appropriate manner, even if it be in public.

Once the Prophet ﷺ was sitting with his Companions, whilst the people were enduring famine, lack of rain and drought. There came a Bedouin and said, "'O Messenger of Allah, people are being destroyed, the children are hungry, wealth has perished. So ask Allah to send us rain, for we seek your intercession with Allah, and Allah's intercession with you!"

The Prophet's facial expressions changed upon hearing the man say, "We seek Allah's intercession with you!" for intercession and mediation is only sought of someone of a lower status with one of a higher status. Hence, it is not permissible to say, "Allah intercedes on behalf of His creation". Rather, He orders them because He is far superior to all else.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Woe be to you! Do you know what you are saying?" The Prophet then began to glorify Allah and kept repeating, "SubhanAllah! SubhanAllah!" He continued to glorify Allah until the seriousness of the matter was noticed in the face of his Companions.

He then said, "Woe be to you! Allah's intercession is not

sought with any of His creation! Allah is far more Sublime than that! Woe be to you! Do you know Allah? His Throne is above His Heavens like such", he said this while forming a dome-shape with his fingers, and said, "The Throne groans as a saddle does because of the rider." (Abu Dawud)

However, if a person makes a mistake in private, how should one deal with it?

Once, the Prophet ﷺ came to 'A'ishah's house – may Allah be pleased with her – to spend the night with her. He took his slippers and his upper garment off and lay down on his bed. He remained liked that until he thought that 'A'ishah had fallen asleep. Thereupon, he got up from his bed, quietly wore his garment and slippers, calmly opened up the door and exited, gently shutting the door behind him.

When 'A'ishah noticed this, she became jealous fearing that perhaps he had gone to his other wives. She got up, wore her upper garment and khimar and went out to follow his footsteps. She followed him without him realising.

The Prophet ﷺ continued walking in the darkness of the night, until he reached al-Baqi' graveyard. He stood there looking at the graves of his Companions, those who lived as worshippers, died as warriors and were gathered together underground in their graves.

The Prophet ﷺ was gazing at their graves, recalling their memories. He then raised his hands and prayed for them. He then began to stare at the graves, and thereafter raised his hands and prayed for them once again. Thereafter, he stayed there for a while, and then raised his hands again praying for their forgive-

ness.

He stayed there for a while, as 'A'ishah watched him from far away, and then decided to turn around and return. When 'A'ishah saw this, she also turned around to return home before she would be spotted by the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ began to walk fast, and so did 'A'ishah. The Prophet ﷺ hastened more as did she. The Prophet ﷺ began to walk even faster, as did she, until she arrived home first, took off her upper garment and her khimar, returned to her bed and lay down, as if she were asleep, whilst she was still breathing heavily. The Prophet ﷺ entered the house and heard her breathe heavily.

He said, "What is wrong with you, O 'A'ishah? Why are you breathing so heavily?"

She replied, "Nothing!"

He said, "Tell me or the Subtle and the Aware will inform me."

She then told him the entire story; that she felt jealous over him and followed him to see where he went.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Are you the one I saw in front of me?"

"Yes", she said.

Upon hearing this, the Prophet ﷺ pushed her in the chest and said, "Did you think that Allah and His Messenger would deal unjustly with you?"

'A'ishah said, "No matter how much people hide, will Allah know it?"

He ﷺ said, "Yes!"

He then explained to her the reason he left and said, "Jibril came to me when you saw me. He did not come in since you had taken off your garment. Thus he called me and he concealed it from you. I responded to his call, but I too concealed it from you. I thought that you had gone to sleep, and I did not like to awaken you, fearing that you may be frightened. He ordered me to go to those buried in al-Baqi and seek forgiveness for them."

Yes! The Prophet ﷺ was easy going and gentle, such that he didn't magnify the mistake. As a matter of fact, he often used to say to the people – as narrated by Muslim, "A believing man does not hate a believing woman. If he dislikes a trait in her, he likes another"; meaning, a man should not utterly hate his wife due to a particular trait or nature. Rather, one should overlook her faults in consideration of her virtues. Hence, when he sees a fault in her, he immediately remembers her virtues. When he witnesses something unsightly in her, he thinks of her beauty. He should try to be oblivious to those manners of hers which he dislikes.

Enlightenment…

The blame is not on the one who does not accept advice.

Rather, it is on the one who presents it inappropriately.

(44)

Untie the bundle

If an error were to occur at the hands of a group of people, then as a rule they should be advised on the spot. However, sometimes you may need to untie the knot of the bundle. I mean by that to speak to each one of them individually and advise them.

For example, if there is a gathering in your house and you happen to overhear your brother speaking to his friends–who were all his guests. You find out that they are planning to travel to a country where most often people become involved in major sins. You decide to advise him, but how should you do so?

You could decide to tackle them all and advise them with a word or two and leave. However, you might not get very successful results. How about if you were to untie the bundle, and deal with it strand-by-strand? Could you do this?

When they have dispersed, sit with the one you think is the most reasonable of them all and say, "O so-and-so, it has reached me that you will be travelling. You seem to be the most intelligent of them all. You know very well that the traveller to this country is not protected from calamities and mishaps. One may even return sick and diseased. How about if you earn their rewards

and suggest that they travel to a different country? There they can enjoy the lakes, beaches and amusements without getting involved in any sin."

No doubt, if he hears this from you in a nice manner, his zeal would be reduced by half. You can then go to the second person and say the same to him, and then the third, etc, without any of them realising what you have already said to his friends.

Thereafter, you will find that when they meet up again, one of them would suggest that they should go to a different country, and he would find another one who would support his suggestion. This way you would have put an end to an evil in an appropriate manner.

Take another example. If you discover one day that your children are getting together in a room to watch a morally depraved video, or a Bluetooth clip of inappropriate pictures, and so on, then perhaps the best solution might be to advise them individually, so that their egos do not compel them to commit sins.

Is there an example for this from the Prophet's life?

Indeed, there is. When the discord between the Prophet ﷺ and the Quraysh became severe, the Quraysh got together and boycotted the Prophet along with all his relatives from Banu Hashim. A declaration was written that none should buy from, sell to, or marry into Banu Hashim.

The Prophet ﷺ along with his Companions was confined to a barren valley. The calamity became so severe upon the Companions that they were feeding on the trees. In fact, as one of them once went to urinate, he heard a sound beneath him. He looked to discover a piece of camel-skin. He took it with him,

washed it and roasted it in fire. He then divided it into small portions, mixed it with water and ate it bit by bit over three days!

When Banu Hashim and the Muslims had endured months of hardship, the Prophet ﷺ said to his uncle Abu Talib, who was also confined to the valley with them, "Dear uncle, Allah has sent the wood worm to destroy the Quraysh's document. It has left in that the name of Allah wherever it occurs in the document, and it has erased all the oppression, boycott and slanders that existed therein." Meaning, the insect had eaten the Quraysh's declaration document and nothing was left of it except the phrase, "In your Name, O Allah."

Upon hearing this, Abu Talib became surprised and said, "Has your Lord informed you of this?"

"Yes", the Prophet ﷺ replied.

He said, "By Allah, before anyone comes to you, I will inform the Quraysh of this."

He then left to see the Quraysh and said to them, "O Quraysh! My nephew has informed me of such and such. Bring your declaration document! If what he said truly happened then you should end the boycott and abandon the declaration. If he has lied then I would leave my nephew to you and you can do what you wish with him!"

The people said, "We are content with this," and agreed to abide by the suggestion. They then looked at the declaration to find it exactly how the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had described it. But they only increased in evil. Banu Hashim and Banu al-Muttalib therefore remained in the valley, until they were about to perish.

Amongst the disbelievers of Quraysh there were some kind men. One of them was Hisham bin 'Amr. He was a noble man amongst his people. He used to load food on his camel and come to Banu Hashim and Banu al-Muttalib in the valley at night. When he approached the entrance of the valley, he would untie the halter of his camel and strike it on the side until it entered the valley.

As days went by, Hisham realised that he was unable to provide them with food every night any longer, especially when there were so many of them. He therefore decided to try to reverse the oppressive declaration. But how could he, when the Quraysh had unanimously agreed to it? He decided to adopt the 'untie the bundle' method. What did he do?

He went to Zuhayr bin Abi Umayyah, whose mother was 'Atika bint 'Abd al-Muttalib, and said, "O Zuhayr, are you pleased that you are able to eat food, wear clothes and marry women, whilst your maternal uncles are in a state you are aware of? They cannot be traded with nor be married into? I swear by Allah, if they were the maternal uncles of Abul-Hakam bin Hisham…" – i.e. Abu Jahl, who was the most severe in his enmity towards the believers and a staunch supporter of the declaration – "…he would not have left them in this state!"

Zuhayr said, "Woe be to you, O Hisham! What can I do? I am only one man. By Allah, if I had another man with me, I would have stood up to reverse it."

Hisham said, "Well, you have found a man."

"Who is it?" asked Zuhayr.

"Myself," replied Hisham.

Zuhayr said, "We need a third person."

Hisham said, "OK, but please conceal my affair."

Thus he went to al-Mut'im bin 'Adiy, who was an intelligent person, and said to him, "O Mut'im, are you pleased that two families from Banu 'Abd Manaf perish, whilst you are not only a witness but also in agreement with Quraysh over this?"

Al-Mut'im said, "Woe be to you! What can I do? I am only one man."

Hisham replied, "I have found a second person for you."

"Who is this person?" al-Mut'im asked.

"It is I," Hisham replied.

Al-Mut'im said, "We would need a third person."

Hisham said, "I have already found one."

Al-Mut'im asked, "Who is it?"

"Zuhayr bin Abi Umayyah," Hisham replied.

Al-Mut'im said, "We want a fourth person."

Hisham said, "Alright, but please conceal my affair."

Hisham then went to Abul-Bakhtari bin Hisham and said to him what he had said to his friends earlier. Abul-Bakhtari became eager and asked, "Have you found anyone to help you in this?"

"Yes," Hisham replied.

"Who is it?" Abul-Bukhtari asked.

"Zuhayr bin Abi Umayyah, al-Mut'im bin 'Adiy and I, we are all with you," replied Hisham.

Abul-Bakhtari said, "We will need a fifth person."

Thereupon, Hisham went to Zam'ah bin al-Aswad. He spoke to him and reminded him of his relationship and their rights over him.

Zam'ah said to him, "Is there anyone else with you on this?"

He replied, "Yes. So-and-so…"

They then all agreed with this opinion and decided to hold a meeting at 'Hatm al-Hujun' at night at the highest part of Makkah. They gathered there and agreed to stand up against the declaration and get it reversed.

Zuhayr said, "I will start by speaking first, and then you can stand up to speak one-by-one."

In the morning, they went to their gatherings in front of the Ka'bah, where people would meet up to trade. Zuhayr bin Abi Umayyah went forth, dressed in a robe, made seven rounds around the Ka'bah, then turned to the people and said in a loud voice, "O People of Makkah! Do we eat food and wear clothes, whilst Banu Hashim are perishing? They are not able to buy or sell! By Allah, I will not sit until this oppressive declaration is torn apart!"

Upon hearing this, Abu Jahl – who was sitting with his companions – screamed and said, "You have lied! By Allah, it will not be torn apart!"

Then Za'mah bin al-Aswad stood up and said in loud voice, "Rather, you are – by Allah – guiltier of lying! We were not pleased at the declaration when it was written."

Abu Jahl turned to him to respond, but suddenly, al-Bakhtari

also stood up and said, "Za'mah is right. We are not pleased with the declaration nor do we agree with it."

Abu Jahl then turned to al-Bakhtari, only to see al-Mut'im bin 'Adiy blaring, "The two of you have spoken the truth and whoever says otherwise has lied! We free ourselves in front of Allah from this declaration and whatever is written therein!"

Then Hisham bin 'Amr stood up and said the same.

Abu Jahl became surprised. He stood silently for a while and then said, "This was planned overnight and decided elsewhere."

Al-Mut'im bin 'Adiy then went to the Ka'bah to tear up the declaration, only to find it already eaten up by an insect. The only words written therein were, "In your Name, O Allah!"

Be clever…

The experienced doctor feels the body with his hands and only then chooses an appropriate place to inject the needle.

(45)

Self torture

One of the most memorable moments in my life was once when we went out into the desert. With us was our friend Abu Khalid whose eyesight was very weak. We would serve him and give him water, dates and coffee, whilst he would insist, "I must help you. I want to work with you. Give me something to do," Meanwhile, we would all forbid him from doing anything.

We had slaughtered a sheep, cut the meat into pieces and brought it along with us in a pot, ready to cook. We hadn't yet lit the fire since we were too busy setting up the tent and arranging other things.

Abu Khalid was taken over by vigour and – although we wish he had not been – he got up and turned to the pot to notice the meat inside. He decided that the first thing we must do is to pour water over the meat. He turned to our belongings in the car, searching through the various things, such as electricity generator, wires, lamps, four bottles with water and petrol, and other items. He took the closest bottle to him and happily returned to the pot and poured half of the bottle in it. When one of us caught sight of it, he screamed, "No! No! Abu Khalid!' while he kept saying, "Leave me to do it for you!"

We immediately snatched the bottle away from him and began to laugh hysterically with tears in our eyes, as we noticed that the bottle contained petrol and not water! Thus, we only had bread and tea for lunch. But the trip was not ruined. Rather, it was one of the best trips we ever had. Why should we continue to torture ourselves over something which was now over and done?

I also remember, when I was in secondary school, I went with a few classmates on a trip. The battery in one of the cars failed. We brought another car face to face with the car that had broken down in order to connect the two batteries together. Meanwhile, Tariq came along and stood between the two cars. He wired the first battery to the dead one. He then asked a friend to turn the engine on.

This friend of ours sat in the car, unaware that the car was in first gear. As soon as he turned the car on, it jumped forward and Tariq's knees were struck by the car bumpers, and he fell to the ground, whilst our friend in the car kept asking, "Shall I turn the engine on, again?"

We moved the cars apart and helped Tariq walk. He was limping and his knees were in severe pain. What surprised me was that he did not increase his pain further by screaming and insulting, or even rebuking anyone. He simply smiled happily. What was the point in screaming, when the matter had finished and this friend of ours had realised his fault?

Therefore, if you want to enjoy your life, then act in accordance with this principle: Do not pay attention to small matters.

Often we torture and lash ourselves, and we feel upset, dis-

tressed and in pain. But pain does not solve any problem.

Suppose you go to a wedding party, wearing a beautiful garment and a beautiful headscarf with an 'Iqal (a headband to keep the scarf in place), such that you look more handsome than the groom himself!

You begin to shake hands with people, one-by-one, and suddenly there comes a child from behind you, holds on to the tip of your headscarf and pulls on it, making it fall along with the headband and the hat. You begin to look like a clown. What should you do in this situation?

Many of us deal with such situations in a way that does not solve the problem. One may run after the child, screaming, insulting and cursing. The result? The child successfully achieves what he wanted, i.e. attracting attention, causing uproar and making people laugh. Some may even film the scene and exchange it with each others via Bluetooth! Here, you are not punishing the child, but actually only punishing yourself.

Or suppose that you wear a new garment, for which you still haven't fully paid. You go to a company for a job interview. You go through one of the doors that has just been coated with paint. Next to it there is a warning sign, but you do not notice it.

Accidentally, some of the paint rubs onto your garment. The painter begins to shout at you, insultingly and angrily. How would you deal with such a scenario? Often we deal with such situations in ways that do not help solve the problem. We would become enraged and insult the painter saying, "Why didn't you make the sign clear?" To which he would reply to you with more anger. As a result, you may get more covered in dust than paint!

Take it easy! Do you realise that by behaving in this manner you are only punishing yourself?

You can say the same if you dress up to deliver a sermon somewhere, and a car passes by as you are coming out of the house, driving over a puddle and thereby splashing water all over your clothes. Would you punish yourself by shouting and yelling at the car and the passengers, when the car has already gone?

Similarly, there is no need to always remember the pains we have had in our lives.

Muhammad ﷺ suffered many painful moments in his life. He once sat with his beloved wife, 'A'ishah – may Allah be pleased with her – silently.

She asked him, "Was there a day in your life more severe than the day of Uhud?"

The memories of that battle went through the Prophet's mind. Oh, how cruel that day was! The day when his uncle Hamza was killed, who was the most beloved of all to him; he stood there gazing at his beloved uncle, seeing his body disfigured: his nose and ears sliced off, his stomach gashed and gaping open and his insides gouged out.

It was the day when the Prophet's teeth were broken, his face was wounded and his blood spilt.

The day of Uhud was the day when his Companions were killed in front of him; the day he returned to Madinah without seventy of his Companions, only to see the widowed women and orphaned children hunting for their loved ones and their fathers! That day truly was very cruel.

‘A’ishah was waiting for a response. The Prophet ﷺ said, “What I suffered at the hands of your people was more severe on me. The day of ‘Aqabah when I offered myself…” and then he related the entire story of seeking help from the people of at-Ta’if, and their rejection of him, followed by the foolish ones amongst them throwing stones at him until his feet bled.

Despite these painful moments in the life of the Prophet ﷺ ,he would continue his life cheerfully and not allow them to embitter him from enjoying his life. These painful moments do not deserve to be remembered. The pains have now gone, and all that is left is joy. Therefore, do not kill yourself with grief. Similarly, do not kill people with grief and blame.

Sometimes, we deal with problems in ways that do not provide solutions.

Al-Ahnaf bin Qays was the leader of Banu Tamim. He did not become a leader due to the strength of his body, or the abundance of wealth, or the nobility of lineage, but due to his forbearance and intellect.

A group of people envied him so they came to a foolish person and said, “Here are a thousand dirhams. Go to the leader of Banu Tamim, al-Ahnaf bin Qays, and slap him across his face.”

The foolish person went ahead and found al-Ahnaf sitting with some men. He was sitting with his legs drawn up to his chest in a garment with all sedateness, speaking to his people. The foolish person slowly came close until he stood next to him. Al-Ahnaf looked up to him thinking he had something pleasant to show him, and suddenly, the foolish person raised his hand and slapped al-Ahnaf across his face so hard that it was as if his

cheek was about to rip open. Al-Ahnaf looked at him, and instead of undoing his garments to free his legs, he said very gently, "Why did you slap me?"

The man said, "My people gave me a thousand dirhams to slap the leader of Banu Tamim."

Al-Ahnaf said, "Oh! You haven't achieved anything, then! I am not the leader of Banu Tamim!"

The man said, "That's strange! Where is the leader of Banu Tamim, then?"

Al-Ahnaf replied, "Do you see that man sitting on his own with a sword to his side?" He pointed to a man called Harith-ah bin Qudamah, who was perpetually full of anger and hate, such that if his anger were to be divided amongst the Ummah, it would have sufficed.

The man replied, "O yes, I see him. Is he the man sitting there?"

Al-Ahnaf replied, "Yes, go to him and give him a slap, for he is the leader of Banu Tamim."

The man went up to him and approached Harithah, while Harithah's eyes brightened with evil. The foolish man stood in front of him, raised his hand and slapped him across the face. His hand had just touched Harithah's face when he got hold of his sword and cut off his hand!

There is an old saying, "The winner is the one who has the last laugh!"

Conviction…

Dealing with a problem in ways that do not serve as a solution only punishes you and does not even solve the problem!

(46)

Problems with no solutions

How many times have you noticed people driving their cars in a rage, often slapping the steering wheel and saying, "Oh! Its always buoy!"

You may see a person walking in the street, no-one can bear to speak to him, he is so annoyed he keeps repeating, "Oh! It's so hot!"

If you were his colleague working in the same office, it would be a trial for you to have to see him everyday. He always distracts you saying, "O man, the work is so much! Oh, when will they increase our salaries?" He arrives frowning and leaves resentful. Sometimes, he complains of pains in his body or his son's bad behaviour.

In short, we should all realise that there are problems in our lives with absolutely no solution, and that the only way to deal with them is by taking things easy.

Yes, enjoy your life! Beware of allowing your difficult situation to impact on your behaviour at work, with your children, your colleagues, etc. What have they done to deserve such punishment for problems which they played no part in, nor are able to provide solutions to? Do not let them associate grief and sad-

ness with you each time they see or remember you.

This is why the Prophet ﷺ forbade one from wailing over the dead, screaming, tearing up clothes, and shaving the head, etc. Why? Because the way to deal with the dead is by washing the body, covering it in a shroud, praying over it, then burying it in the grave and praying for the deceased. Screaming and wailing serves no purpose, except that it turns the joy of life into grief.

Once al-Ma'afi bin Sulayman was walking with his companion, and his companion turned to him, frowned and said, "How cold it is today!"

Al-Ma'afi said, "Have you warmed up now?'

"No", he replied.

Al-Ma'afi said, "So what was the point of complaining? If you had glorified Allah, at least it would have been better for you."

And how accurate was his understanding and wisdom!

Live your life…

Do not expose problems you are unaware of, and do not expound on small matters. Simply continue to enjoy your life.

(47)

Do not kill yourself by grief

Sa'd was a student of mine at the university. Once he was absent for a whole week, so when I met him, I said, "I hope everything is fine, Sa'd?"

"Nothing's wrong at all, I was just a little busy", Sa'd replied.

It was obvious that he was grief stricken. I said to him, "What's the news?"

He replied, "My son is ill. He has an injured liver, and a few days ago he also contracted blood poisoning. Also, just yesterday I was shocked to hear that the poisoning has now reached the brain."

I said, "There is no might or strength except by Allah! Have patience! I pray to Allah that He cures him. And if Allah were to decree anything for him (i.e. death), I ask Allah to make him your intercessor on the Day of Resurrection."

He replied, "Intercessor? Dear Shaykh, my son is not that young."

"How old is he?" I asked.

"Seventeen years old", he replied.

I said, "I pray to Allah that He cures him and bless his broth-

ers."

He lowered his head and said, "Dear Shaykh, he has no brothers. I have not been blessed with any more children, and he has been afflicted with this illness as you can see."

His situation had an impact on me, but I remained firm and said, "Dear Sa'd, in short, do not kill yourself with grief. Nothing will afflict us except what Allah has already written." I then consoled him and left.

Yes, do not kill yourself with grief, for that will not lighten your troubles.

I remember that sometime ago I went to al-Madinah al-Nabawiyya and met up with Khalid. He said to me, "What do you say if we visit Dr. 'Abdullah?"

I said, "Why? What's the news?"

He replied, "For condolences."

"For condolences?" I remarked, in surprise.

He said, "Yes. His eldest son went to a wedding party with the entire family in a nearby city, whilst he remained behind in Madinah due to his commitments at the university. On the way back they were involved in a terrible road accident in which they died - all eleven of them!"

The Doctor was a righteous man beyond fifty years of age, but nevertheless, a human being with feelings and emotions. He had a heart in his chest, and two weeping eyes, and of course, a soul that became happy and sad.

When he heard the terrible news, he prayed over them and

buried them with his own hands, all eleven of them.

He began to wander about his house in bewilderment. He would pass by toys that lay there untouched for days, because the Khulud and Sarah who would play with them had died.

He would return to his bed which hadn't been made because Umm Salih, his wife, had died.

He would pass by Yasir's bicycle which hadn't moved for days since the one who used to ride it had died.

He would enter his eldest daughter's room to see her wedding suitcases arranged and her clothes lying on her bed. She died when she was in the middle of arranging her wedding clothes.

Glory be to the One who gave him patience and made him strong!

Guests would come to his house and bring coffee along with them, as he didn't have anyone to help him prepare anything for them. What is amazing is that if you were to see the man receiving condolences, you would think that he was the one giving condolences, and that the one enduring this tragedy was someone else!

He would repeatedly say, "To Allah we belong and to Him we return. It belongs to Allah, whatever He takes or gives. Everything has an appointed time with Allah."

This is the peak of intelligence, for if he did not behave in this manner, he would have died of grief.

I know someone who whenever I see him he is happy. Yet, if you were to consider his situation, you would find that he has a very humble occupation, he lives in very small rented accom-

modation, his car is very old and he has many children. Despite this, he is always smiling and loving. He loves his life.

That's right! Do not kill yourself with grief and do not complain frequently until people become tired of you, like a person whose son is disabled, so whenever he sees you he keeps you busy with his complaints, "My son is ill… I feel for him… poor son of mine…"

You will soon find yourself fed up of him and feel like screaming, "Enough, dear brother! Enough! I get your point!"

Or imagine a woman frequently saying to her husband, "Our house is old… the car is about to break down… my clothes are out of fashion…"

What is the benefit in complaining? It only increases the suffering.

You spend your entire life, O poor man, moaning and grieving

You remain with your hands tied, complaining, "Time is against me"

If you do not carry the burdens yourself, who will?

Enlightenment…

Live your life with what you have available, and you will always be happy

(48)

Be content with what Allah has apportioned for you

I once went on a trip to a country to deliver some lectures. The country was well known for having a huge mental hospital, or as the people would refer to it, "the mad people's hospital."

I delivered two lectures one morning and there remained an hour until Dhuhr. With me was 'Abd al-'Aziz, one of the most prominent preachers in that country. As we sat in the car, I turned to him and said, "Abd al-'Aziz, there is a place I wish to visit, as we have some time."

He said, "Where would you like to go? Your friend, Shaykh 'Abdullah, has travelled and as for Doctor Ahmad, I phoned him but he didn't respond. Would you like to go to the heritage museum, or…?"

"No. In fact, I would like to visit the mental hospital," I said.

"The mad people?" he asked in surprise.

"Yes, the mad people", I said in response.

He laughed and said jokingly, "Why? Perhaps you want to be reassured of your own sanity?"

I said, "No. Only to benefit, take lessons and realise Allah's blessings on us."

'Abd al-'Aziz remained silent, thinking about their condition. I realised that he was a little upset, because he was quite an emotional person. He took me to the hospital in his car. We arrived at a site that looked like a cave. It was surrounded by trees from all sides. It was noticeably a very depressing environment.

We met one of the doctors who welcomed us and took us for a tour of the hospital. The doctor then began to relate to us the suffering of the patients and said, "Hearing about something is not the same as witnessing it yourself."

We went passed a passageway where I heard voices coming from different directions. The patient wards were on either sides of the lobby. We went past a room to the right. I looked therein to notice more than ten empty beds, and one on which there was a man lying down, shaking his hands and feet.

I turned to the doctor and said, "What is this?"

He said, "He is crazy. He gets epilepsy attacks every five to six hours."

I said, 'There is no power nor might except with Allah! How long has he been like this for?"

He said, "For more than ten years." I took it as a lesson for myself and walked on silently.

After walking a few steps further, we passed by another room with the door closed. The door had an opening through which a man inside was looking out and making signs to us which we couldn't understand. I attempted to have a glance inside the room only to find that the walls and the floor were all brown.

I asked the doctor, "What is this?"

The doctor replied, "A crazy person!"

I felt that he was not taking me seriously, so I said to him, "I know he is crazy, for if he was sane he wouldn't be here. I want to know what his story is."

He replied, "If this man sees a wall, his limbs spring into action and he begins to hit the wall with his hands, or his feet and sometimes his head. One day his fingers are broken, another day his legs and yet another day he cracks his skull, etc."

The doctor then lowered his head in sorrow and said, "We weren't able to treat him, so we've locked him up in a room as you can see. The walls and the floor are covered with sponge, so he can beat himself however he wishes." The doctor was then silent and walked on ahead of us.

As for my friend and I, we simply stood there saying, "Praise be to Allah who has saved us from what He has afflicted them with." We then went ahead passing by many rooms on either side of us, until we passed by a room with no beds. There were more than thirty men inside, each on his own. One person was giving Adhan, another was singing, another was turning round and round, while another was dancing. There were three men amongst them who were made to sit on chairs with their hands and feet tied. They were looking around and trying to turn around but could not. I became shocked and asked the doctor, "What is wrong with these people? Why did you tie them up and not the others?"

He replied, "The problem with these three is that when they see something in front of them, they strike it. They break the windows, air conditioners, doors, etc. We therefore tie them up

like this from morning till evening."

I said, "Since when have they been like this?"

He replied, "This one for about ten years, that one for about seven and the other one is relatively new here; he has only been here for five years!"

I left their room contemplating their state, and praising Allah who had saved me from what he had afflicted them with.

I asked him, "Where is the hospital exit?"

He said, "There is still one room left to see. Perhaps there is an additional lesson to be learnt from it. Come with me."

He took me by my hand to a large room. He opened the door, took my hand and entered the room. The scene in the room was similar to what I had seen in the previous room: a group of patients, every one of them alone, one dancing, another sleeping, etc. And to my surprise, what did I see? A man who was beyond fifty years of age, his hair grey, was squatting on the floor. He was squashed down low, staring at us and was visibly terrified.

All of this was bearable, but the strangest thing that frightened me and nearly made me jump, was the fact that the man was completely naked and did not even have a piece of cloth to cover his private parts!

My facial complexion changed and I immediately turned to the doctor. When he saw the redness in my eyes, he said, "Cool your anger. I will explain to you his condition. This man, whenever we make him wear a garment, he bites it with his teeth, tears it apart and tries to swallow it. In one day, we may give him more

than ten sets of clothes to wear, and they will all be torn apart. The man is unable to bear any piece of clothing on his skin, thus we leave him like this come summer or winter. All those around him are mentally ill, unable to comprehend his condition."

I left the room and was unable to bear any more. I said to the doctor, "Please take me to the exit."

I said, "Actually, some sections are still left to visit."

He said, "I think, what we have seen so far is sufficient."

The doctor walked on and I walked beside him. He was walking past many wards while we remained silent. Suddenly, he turned to me as if he had just remembered something and said, "Dear Shaykh, there is a person here who was a prominent businessman. He is a millionaire. He became mentally ill, so his children brought him here and left him two years ago. There is another person here who was an engineer. Another person here was…" The doctor began informing me of those who were degraded after being honourable, and others who became poor after being rich, and so on. I was walking through the patient rooms thinking, "Glory be to the One who apportioned provision amongst the slaves. He gives to whomever He wills and withholds from whomever He wills."

Allah may provide someone with wealth, noble lineage and status, yet deprive him of sanity. You will find him the wealthiest and the strongest of all, yet he is imprisoned in a mental hospital.

Allah may give another person a noble lineage, abundant wealth and great intellect, yet deprive him of health. You will find him lying on his bed for twenty or thirty years. His wealth and

his lineage are useless.

Then there are those whom Allah gives health, strength and intellect, yet deprives of them wealth, so you see them carrying their loads in marketplaces, or as unprivileged and poor people who keep switching between humble jobs and hardly earn enough to stave their hunger.

This is how Allah gives people some things while depriving them of others. Your Lord creates what He wills and chooses. The people have no choice therein.

Hence, it is befitting for anyone afflicted with a calamity to recall Allah's favours to him before counting the calamities Allah is testing him with, for if He has deprived you of wealth, He has given you health. If He has deprived you of both, then He has given you intellect. If He has deprived you of all, then at least He has gifted you with Islam. Congratulations to you for living Islam and dying upon it. So you may shout at the top of your voice, 'al-Hamdulillah!'

This is how the Prophet's Companions were – may Allah be pleased with them all.

The Prophet ﷺ sent 'Amr bin al-'Aas – may Allah be pleased with him – to Syria on the expedition of Dhat al-Salasil. When he arrived at the scene, he noticed that the enemy was great in number. He sent a message to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asking him for reinforcements, so the Prophet ﷺ sent him Abu 'Ubaydah bin al-Jarrah with a unit consisting of the early Muhajirun, including Abu Bakr and 'Umar, making Abu 'Ubaydah the commander.

The Prophet ﷺ said to Abu 'Ubaydah upon dispatching him,

"The two of you should not differ…"

Thus, Abu 'Ubaydah went forth until he reached 'Amr bin al-'Aas, who said to him, "You have come as a reinforcement for my army, and I am its commander."

Abu 'Ubaydah said, "No. Rather, I remain in my position, as you remain in yours", meaning, I am the commander over my unit with whom I have come, and you are a commander over your own army.

Abu 'Ubaydah was a very lenient and easy going person. Worldly things did not matter much to him.

'Amr said in response, "No. Rather, you are sent as reinforcement for my army."

Abu 'Ubaydah replied, "O 'Amr, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said to me: 'The two of you should not differ'; so even if you were to disobey me, I will obey you."

In response, 'Amr said, "In that case, I am your commander and you are my reinforcement."

Abu 'Ubaydah agreed to this, and therefore, 'Amr bin al-'Aas – may Allah be pleased with him – stepped forward and led the people in prayer. After the expedition, the first person to arrive back in Madinah was 'Awf bin Malik – may Allah be pleased with him. Upon arrival, he went to the Prophet ﷺ. When the Prophet ﷺ saw him he said, "Tell me what happened." He informed the Prophet ﷺ about the expedition including what took place between Abu 'Ubaydah and 'Amr bin al-'Aas.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "May Allah have mercy on Abu 'Ubaydah bin al-Jarrah."

Indeed! May Allah have mercy on Abu ‘Ubaydah bin al-Jarrah!

A thought…

Look to the brighter aspects of your life before looking at the dark side and you will surely be happy.

(49)

Be a mountain

During the early days of my career in Da‘wah, I was called to give a lecture in a certain city. One of those responsible for Da‘wah in that city came to collect me. I got into his car which was pretty old. I spoke with him and he told me that he had just got married. He then complained to me about the extravagance in dowry in their city, so much so that he was not able to buy a new car, or at least a car in a better condition than the one he had. I prayed that Allah help him in his situation.

I then entered a mosque and delivered a lecture. Towards the end, when questions were being read out to me, there came a question about extravagance in dowry. I was very pleased and said, "Here's a question I like!"

I then began to speak about extravagance in dowry and its evil effects on young men and women. I mentioned that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not marry off his daughters for more than five hundred dirhams. I then raised my voice and said, "Meaning, your daughters, O such-and-such tribe are you more precious than the daughters of the Prophet ﷺ?"

Upon hearing this, an old man shouted out from a corner, "Why are you speaking about our daughters?" Another rose up

and said, "He is speaking badly about our daughters!" Another stood up and said, "Oh! Is he speaking about our daughters?" I was in a situation that no one would like to be in. I was still in the very early stages of Da'wah, having recently graduated from university. I remained silent and did not move my lips.

I smiled as the first one spoke. When the second spoke, I looked at him and also smiled, and the same went for the third. Some of the youths at the far end of the mosque were laughing. Some of them stood up to see what was happening, as if they were saying to me, "The Shaykh's donkey is stuck behind the barrier!", an idiom used for a man who falls into a problem and finds it difficult to get out of it.

When they saw that I remained calm, they calmed down themselves. Then one of them stood up and said, "People! Allow the Shaykh to explain what he meant!" The people became silent, and I thanked the man for what he did. I then apologised and praised them, as well as their daughters, and explained what I had meant.

When you deal with people, in reality you are creating your own personality. You are the one drawing the image that they have of you in their minds. Based on this impression, they decide how to deal with you, and whether to respect you or not. Make sure that the tree is firmly grounded and is not uprooted by the winds, no matter how strong they may be. Just an hour of patience will result in victory. The more intelligent you become, the less ignorant you are. The more your worth increases, the less angry you become. Just like the seas that are not moved by anything. Be like a mountain and no wind will ever shake you!

In fact, if ever a person aggravates you in a gathering, or a house, or a satellite TV channel, or a lecture, and you remain calm and not get angry or excited, the people will incline towards you and turn against him.

Abu Sufyan bin Harb was coming back to Makkah with a caravan carrying merchandise from Syria. The Muslims found out and marched forth to fight him. Abu Sufyan fled with his caravan and sent a message to Quraysh informing them thereof. Quraysh emerged with a huge army and there took place the battle of Badr between the Muslims and the Quraysh where the Muslims were victorious. Seventy men from the disbelievers were killed and seventy of them were taken captives. The rest of the Quraysh army returned injured and hungry.

Abu Sufyan then returned to Makkah only to witness the defeated Qurayshi army. The people of Makkah had suffered a great calamity. Thereupon 'Abdullah bin Abi Rabi'ah, 'Ikrimah bin Abi Jahl and Safwan bin Umayyah along with some other men of Quraysh who had lost their fathers, sons and brothers at Badr, went to Abu Sufyan and anyone who had a share in his caravan's merchandise, or those with wealth, and said to them, "O Quraysh! Indeed Muhammad has greatly harmed you and killed the best of you. Aid us with your wealth in our war against him so we may avenge our killed ones."

They agreed and Allah revealed, concerning them, "Those who disbelieve spend their wealth to divert people away from the path of Allah. They will surely spend it, which will then become an agony for them, after which they will be defeated. Those who disbelieved will be resurrected for Hell."

Thus, the Quraysh marched forth, along with the loyal tribes such as Banu Kinanah and the people of Tihamah with all their weaponry, free men and slaves. They brought their women with them, lest the men ran away from the battle. Abu Sufyan went with his wife Hind bint 'Utbah. 'Ikrimah bin Abi Jahl went with his wife Umm Hakim bint al-Harith, and al-Harith went with his wife Fatimah bint al-Walid bin al-Mughirah. The disbelieving army came and stopped at the edges of the valley facing Madinah.

When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ heard of this he consulted his Companions and asked, "What do you think? Shall we stay in Madinah and fight them if they enter the city?"

Those of the Muslims who had not participated in Badr said to him, "O Messenger of Allah! We'll go out to them and fight them at Uhud." They wished to attain the status that was attained by the people of Badr.

They remained with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ until he entered his home, wore his battle gear and came out to the people. When they saw him dressed up in battle gear, they began to regret their suggestion and felt that perhaps they had forced the Prophet ﷺ into going out of Madinah to fight. They said, "O Messenger of Allah, stay in Madinah if you wish. It is your decision, after all."

The Prophet ﷺ said to them, "It is not befitting for a Prophet to take off his battle gear after wearing it, until Allah has decided between him and his enemies."

When Abu Sufyan arrived at the foot of Mount Uhud, those Muslims who had not participated in Badr rejoiced upon seeing the enemy. They said, "Allah has brought near to us our wish-

es!"

The Prophet ﷺ then said to his Companions, "Who can lead us to where the enemy is through a short passage that does not pass by them?"

A man from Banu Harithah bin al-Harith, known as Abu Khaythamah said, "I will, O Messenger of Allah!" He took the Muslims through Banu Harithah's land, properties and farms until he passed by the fields of a man called Marba' bin Qaydhi. He was a blind hypocrite. When he realised that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ along with the Muslims are passing by he began to throw dust in their faces, saying, "If you are the Messenger of Allah, then I do not allow you to enter my fields!"

The wretched man then took a handful of sand and said, "By Allah, if I knew for sure that I wouldn't strike anyone else but you with this, I would have thrown it in your face!"

When the Companions heard this, they rushed to attack him to teach him a lesson, but the Prophet ﷺ said, "Do not kill him. He is blind – blind in the heart and in the eyes."

Thus, the Prophet ﷺ moved on and did not look back at the hypocrite because the Prophet ﷺ was sedate, wise and intelligent, such that he would not look back at foolish people, nor get aggravated by the worthless.

Conviction…

The wind never moves a mountain, but it plays with sand, shaping it as it wishes.

(50)

Do not curse him because he drinks alcohol!

Most of the people with whom we mix, no matter how evil they may be, will always have some good in them, even if it be relatively little. In such cases, if we are able to access their good qualities, then that is for the best.

A criminal may be known for climbing over into people's houses and stealing their property in order to give some of it to the destitute and the orphans, or even to build mosques there-with! Likewise a woman may see some orphans starving, so she fornicates to earn some money to stave their hunger, or a person carrying a knife to stab someone, then he sees a child or a woman, and his heart melts so he drops the knife!

Therefore, you should deal with the people in accordance with what you know of good from them, before thinking badly of them. Our beloved Prophet, Muhammad ﷺ was known for his character of making excuses for those who err, and thinking good of those who sin.

When he would come across a sinful person, he would first look at the aspects of his faith, then look at the aspects of his whims and disobedience. He would not have bad thoughts about anyone. He would treat them all as his own sons and brothers.

A man at the time of the Prophet ﷺ was an alcoholic. Once he was brought to the Prophet ﷺ in drunken state, and it was decreed that he be lashed. After a few days, he was caught drinking again, and was brought to the Prophet ﷺ and lashed. After a few days he was caught yet again drinking alcohol, and brought to the Prophet ﷺ and lashed.

After being lashed, when he turned to leave, a person from the Companions said, "May Allah curse him! How often he has come here to be lashed!"

The Prophet ﷺ turned to him whilst his complexion had visibly changed, and said, "Do not curse him! By Allah, I know that he loves Allah and His Messenger!" (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

When you deal with people, be just. Remember the good that they have, and make them feel that their evil has not made you forget their good. This will bring them closer to you.

Art…

Before you begin to uproot the 'tree of evil' in others, look for the 'tree of good' and water it…

(51)

If what you desire does not happen, then desire that which does

If you are obliged to do something or forced into a situation then you might as well enjoy it!. This is what I used to say to a young man who had diabetes. He used to drink tea without sugar and feel sorry for himself.

I would say to him, "When you feel sorry and sad while drinking your tea, does the bitterness turn into sweetness?"

"No", he replied.

I said, "Then, so long as you are forced in to a situation, enjoy it."

What I mean here is that the world is not always as we wish it to be, and this happens frequently in our lives. Perhaps your car is old, its air conditioner is not working and the seat covers are all torn. At present, you are not able to replace the car. What then is the solution? So long as you are bound by this situation, just continue to enjoy your life.

You apply for a seat in a particular department in the university, but your application is only accepted by a department in which you do not want to study. You try to change your predicament, but you can not. You end up having to study for 3 years in a department that was not your choice. What should you do?

Enjoy!

You propose to a girl but she refuses and marries someone else. What is the solution? This is a situation that can not be changed so just enjoy it!

Many people think the solution is permanent depression, or grumbling over the situation, or excessive complaining to those they know and those they don't! This does not help them acquire the provision they have missed out on, or gain provision that is not meant to be for them. So what then is the solution? If what you desire does not happen, then desire that which has happened. The intelligent person is the one who readjusts himself in accordance with his situation, however it may be, seeing as he is not able to change it for the better.

One of my friends was supervising the construction of a mosque and during the process, its funds became restricted. So he went with his friends to some businessmen to ask for a donation. When they visited one such man, the man opened the door for them, sat with them for a while, and gave them whatever he could. He then took some medicine out of his pocket to consume. One of those who were present said to him, "I hope everything is fine and this is nothing serious!"

He replied, "No. These are sleeping pills. For ten years I have not been able to sleep without them."

They prayed for him and left.

On their way home they came across excavations and road works on the exit of the city, along with which there was an extremely loud and noisy electricity generator. The strange thing though was that the man guarding the generator was a poor

worker who was lying down asleep on pieces of newspaper.

Yes, live your life as there is no time to grieve. Deal with what you have in front of you.

Once, the Prophet ﷺ went out with his Companions on an expedition where their food supply became scarce and they became tired. He ordered them to gather whatever food they had, and laid down his cloak. A man would come with a date or two, or a piece of bread and leave it on the cloak. When all the food was collected on the cloak, they enjoyably ate. Perhaps none of them ate his fill, but at least they staved their hunger. One can only be generous with what he actually has.

A general view...

Not everything a man desires he achieves. Often the winds blow in unfavourable directions for the ships.

(52)

We can disagree and still be brothers!

It is mentioned that ash-Shafi'i – may Allah have mercy on him – debated a scholar over a complex legal issue. They differed and argued for a long time, during which they raised their voices and failed to convince each other. The other scholar's complexion changed and he became angry and felt hurt. When the meeting ended and they decided to leave, al-Shafi'i turned to the scholar, took hold of his hand and said, "Why can't we differ and still be brothers?"

Some scholars of Hadith once sat in the presence of a Caliph. One of the scholars in the gathering narrated a Hadith, and thereupon, another scholar became very surprised and said, "This is not a Hadith! From where did you get it? Are you lying upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ?"

The scholar replied, "To the contrary, this is a well established Hadith!"

The other scholar said, "No! We have never heard this Hadith nor memorised it!"

In the gathering there was an intelligent vizier. He turned to the scholar and said very gently, "O Shaykh, have you memorised all of the Hadith of the Prophet ﷺ?"

"No", the scholar replied.

The vizier asked, "So did you memorise half of them?"

"Perhaps", the scholar replied.

The vizier replied, "Then consider this Hadith to be from the half you have not memorised!" and that was the end of the problem.

Al-Fudhayl bin 'Ayadh and 'Abdullah bin al-Mubarak were two close friends who would never leave each other. They were both modest scholars.

'Abdullah bin al-Mubarak decided to go for Jihad and join the garrison troops for guard duty at the frontiers, while al-Fudhayl bin 'Ayadh decided to stay in the Haram to pray and worship Allah.

One day, his heart melted and he began to weep. Al-Fudhayl was sitting in the Haram and worshipping Allah. He longed for his friend, Ibn al-Mubarak, and recalled their gatherings in which they would remember Allah. Thus, al-Fudhayl wrote to Ibn al-Mubarak asking him to come to the Haram for worship, remembrance of Allah and recitation of the Qur'an.

When Ibn al-Mubarak read al-Fudhayl's letter, he took a piece of paper and wrote to al-Fudhayl:

"O you who worships in the vicinity of the Two Holy Mosques! If you but see us, you will realise that you are only jesting in worship.

He who brings wetness to his cheek with his tears should know.

Our necks become wet with our blood.

He who tires his horses without purpose, now that our horses are getting tired in battle.

The scent of perfume is yours, while ours is

The glimmer of spears and the stench of dust [in battle].

We were narrated about in the speech of our Prophet,

An authentic statement that never lies

That the dust that erupts by Allah's horses and which fills the nostrils of a man, Shall never be combined with the smoke of a raging Fire.

This, the Book of Allah speaks to us. Is that the martyr is not dead, and this cannot be denied.

He then said,

"From Allah's slaves are those whom Allah has blessed with fasting. They fast like no other people. From them are those blessed with recitation of the Qur'an. From them are those blessed with seeking knowledge. From them are those blessed with Jihad, and from them are those blessed with praying at night. What you are engrossed in is not better than what I am engrossed in. Both of us are involved in something good."

This is how gently the dispute ended between the two of them, by simply saying, "both of us are doing good," and as Allah says, "Your Lord creates what He wills and chooses."

This was the way of the Companions.

A group of disbelievers got together and rallied to fight the Muslims in Madinah. They came with an army the like of which

was never witnessed amongst the Arabs, in terms of numbers and weapons.

In response, the Muslims dug up trenches which were not able to be crossed in order to enter Madinah. Hence, the disbelieving army was kept behind the trenches. In Madinah, there was a tribe called Banu Quraydhah. They were Jews, lying in wait for the believers. They turned to the disbelievers to help them and began to cause mischief and disorder in Madinah, whilst the Muslims were busy guarding the city at the trenches.

The days passed with great difficulty until Allah sent wind and His hidden army against the disbelievers that tore their army apart. They turned back in failure, dragging their belongings back with them in the darkness of the night.

When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ woke up the next morning, he departed from the trenches for Madinah. The Muslims put their weapons down and returned home. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ entered his home, put his weapons down and took a bath. When the time for Dhuhr prayer entered, Jibril came and called the Messenger of Allah ﷺ from outside his house. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ instantly stood up in fear. Jibril عليه السلام said to him, "Have you put down your weapons, O Messenger of Allah?"

"Yes", the Prophet replied.

Jibril said, "The angels have not yet put down their weapons. I have just come back, having chased them away. We chased them until we reached Hamra al-Asad", meaning, they chased the Quraysh away when they left Madinah for Makkah. The angels were following them and chasing them away from Madinah.

Jibreel then said, "Allah has ordered you to head for Banu

Quraydhah, for I am heading towards them to shake the earth beneath them."

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ then ordered a man to make an announcement, "Whosoever hears and obeys, let him not pray the 'Asr prayer except in Banu Quraydhah." The men dashed to grab their weapons, they heard and obeyed and went to the dwellings of Banu Quraydhah, but as they were on their way, the time for 'Asr prayer entered upon them. Some of them said, "We will not pray 'Asr except in Banu Quraydhah's dwellings." Others argued, "Rather, we will pray now, for this wasn't what the Prophet meant. He only wanted us to hurry."

They prayed 'Asr and continued with their journey, while others delayed the prayer until they reached Banu Quraydhah.

When this was mentioned to the Prophet ﷺ he did not chastise any of the two groups. The Prophet ﷺ then besieged Banu Quraydhah until Allah gave him victory over them.

Consider how they used to differ amongst each other as brothers, such that their differences would not lead to discord, argumentation and people turning against each other.

Believe me, if you deal with the people with ease and gentleness, and with an open mind, they will love you and you would thereby enter into their hearts. And before all of this, Allah would love you, for discord is something always negative.

A point of view...

The objective is not that we should agree. Rather, the objective is not to conflict.

(53)

Gentleness only beautifies

We often comment in amazement at a person, "He is clam, he is unflustered, he is composed."

When we would like to criticise a person, we would say, "He is hasty… he is weak…"

As for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, then he would say, "Gentleness beautifies everything. Harshness disfigures." (Muslim)

Are you able to move a ton of metal with your finger?

Yes! If you bring a crane, gently and properly tie it to the metal, and activate the crane, you would see the metal hanging in midair. You can move it with your little finger.

Two friends once agreed to approach a man to propose marriage to two of his daughters. One of the daughters was older than the other. One of the two men said to the other, "I will take the younger and you take the older."

"No! You take the older and I will take the younger!" said the other man.

The first man replied, "OK. You take the younger and I will take the one younger than her."

"Agreed!"

The man didn't realise that his friend didn't actually change his mind. He only changed his tactics by being gentle.

It has come in a Hadith, "If Allah decides well for a family, he blesses them with gentleness. If Allah decides evil for a family, he deprives them of gentleness." (Ahmad, Sahih)

Another Hadith states, "Allah is gentle and loves gentleness, and gives due to gentleness what He does not give to harshness or anything else." (Muslim)

A gentle person who is easy going and soft is beloved to all people. People feel comfortable with such a person and trust him, especially if gentleness is accompanied with beautiful speech and the skill of dealing with people correctly.

Al-Imam Abu Yusuf, the judge, was from the most famous Hanafi scholars. He was the most prominent student of Abu Hanifah. Abu Yusuf was very poor during his childhood and his father would forbid him from attending Abu Hanifah's lessons and instead order him to go to the marketplace to earn a living. Abu Hanifah was very keen for him, and would reprimand him if he missed his lessons.

One day, Abu Yusuf complained to Abu Hanifah about his father. Abu Hanifah called his father and asked him, "How much does your son earn in one day?"

He replied, "Two dirhams."

Abu Hanifah said, "I will give you two dirhams if you allow him to study."

Thus, Abu Yusuf studied with his teacher for years. When Abu Yusuf grew into a young man and became distinguished amongst

his colleagues, he became afflicted with an illness that left him bedridden. When Abu Hanifah visited him he noticed that his illness was very severe, he became sad and feared that he may die.

He left Abu Yusuf saying to himself, "Alas, Abu Yusuf! How I wished that you would serve the people after me!"

Abu Hanifah went along dragging his feet to his study circle where his students were waiting. After a couple of days, Abu Yusuf recovered. He took a bath, wore his clothes and went off to attend his teacher's lessons. Those around him asked, "Where are you going?"

"To the Shaykh's lesson", he replied.

They said, "Even now you are studying? You don't need to. Haven't you heard what the Shaykh has said about you?"

"What did he say?" he enquired.

They said, "He has said: 'I wished that you would serve the people after me', meaning, you have acquired all the knowledge of Abu Hanifah, and if the teacher were to die today, you would have sat in his place."

Abu Yusuf felt amazed at himself, and went to the Masjid where he saw Abu Hanifah's study circle in a corner, so he went to another corner and began to teach and pass verdicts!

Abu Hanifah noticed the new study circle and asked, "Whose study circle is this?"

They said, "Abu Yusuf's."

"Has he recovered?" he asked.

"Yes", they said.

Abu Hanifah then asked, "Why didn't he come to our lesson?"

They replied, "He was informed of what you had said, so he began to teach the people, since he isn't in need of you anymore."

Abu Hanifah then thought about how to deal with this case in a gentle manner, and came up with an idea to teach Abu Yusuf a lesson.

He turned to one of his students and said, "O so-and-so, go to the Shaykh sitting over there – i.e. Abu Yusuf – and say to him, 'O Shaykh! I have a question.' He would be very happy with you upon you asking him questions, for he has only sat there to be asked questions!

Say to him, 'A man gives his garment to a tailor to get it shortened. When he returns to him after a few days to collect it, the tailor denies that he ever had his garment. The man goes to the police to complain, and the police enter the shop and recover his garment for him.

The question is: Does the tailor deserve the payment for shortening the garment or not?'

If he says to you, 'Yes, he deserves it', tell him he is wrong.

And if he says to you, 'No, he does not deserve it', tell him he is wrong."

The student was pleased to learn this complex question and went off to Abu Yusuf and said, "O Shaykh! I have a question."

Abu Yusuf said, "What is your question?"

He said, "A man gives his garment to the tailor…", and before he could finish, Abu Yusuf replied, "Yes, he deserves payment, as long as he has finished his work."

The questioner said, "You are wrong."

Abu Yusuf became surprised and thought about the issue deeply and said, "Actually, he does not deserve payment."

The questioner said, "You are wrong, again."

Abu Yusuf looked at him and said, "By Allah, who sent you here?"

The man pointed towards Abu Hanifah and said, "The Shaykh sent me."

Abu Yusuf stood from his gathering and went to Abu Hanifah's circle and said, "O Shaykh! I have a question."

Abu Hanifah ignored him.

Abu Yusuf then came and sat on his knees in front of the Shaykh, and said with all due respect, "O Shaykh, I have a question."

He said, "What is your question?"

Abu Yusuf said, "You know what the question is."

"The question about the tailor and the garment?" asked Abu Hanifah.

"Yes", replied Abu Yusuf.

Abu Hanifah said, "You answer the question. Aren't you a Shaykh?"

He replied, "Rather, you are the Shaykh."

Abu Hanifah then said in response to the question, "We check how much he shortened the garment by. If the garment was shortened to match the man's height, then it means he did the work completely. But then it occurred to him that he should deny having his garment. In this case, he shortened the garment for this man, and therefore he deserves to be paid.

But if he had shortened the garment to suit his own height then that means he shortened the garment for himself and therefore does not deserve any payment."

Upon hearing that, Abu Yusuf kissed Abu Hanifah's forehead and remained his student until Abu Hanifah passed away. Only then did Abu Yusuf sit in his place to teach the people.

How beautiful is gentleness and how wonderful it is to deal with such issues with tenderness!

If married couples, parents, managers and teachers were to be gentle in their approach, most problems and argumentation would diminish. We are always required to be gentle, while driving, teaching, buying and selling. However, a person might sometimes be required to be firm, even while advising. This is considered being wise while advising, and that is by dealing with each case on its own merit.

The Prophet's anger – if he ever became angry – was always in religious matters. The Prophet ﷺ never became angry for his own sake. He would only become angry if one of Allah's sanctities was being violated.

Once 'Umar bin al-Khattab – may Allah be pleased with him–

met a Jewish person. The Jewish person showed him a passage from the Torah, which amazed 'Umar, so he took a copy for himself. He then came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ with this passage from the Torah and read it out to him. The Prophet ﷺ realised that 'Umar was taken by the passage and that if the door was opened up for deriving rulings from previous religions, then their books would become mixed with the Qur'an, thereby leaving the people perplexed. How could 'Umar have gone ahead and made a copy of the passage and written it with his own hands without asking the Prophet ﷺ?

The Prophet ﷺ became angry and said, "Are you confused over this, O Ibn al-Khattab?" meaning, are you doubting my Shari'ah?

He then said, "I swear by the One who has my soul in His Hand, I have come to you with something crystal clear. Do not ask them about anything, lest they inform you of the truth and you reject it, or they inform you of falsehood and you believe in it. I swear by the One who has my soul in His hand, if Musa was alive today, he would have no choice but to follow me." (Ahmad, Abu Ya'la and Bazzar, Hasan)

Yes, although we urge gentleness, firmness is sometimes needed.

During the early stages of the Prophet's prophethood, he used to come to the Ka'bah, whilst the Quraysh would be sitting in their gatherings. He would pray and not pay any attention to them. They would hurt him in many ways, whilst he would bear it all with patience.

One day, the noble ones from Quraysh gathered together

and mentioned the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said, "We have never come across anything more severe than what we have had to bear from this man. He has declared our views stupid. He has insulted our forefathers. He has condemned our religion. He has disunited our ranks, and insulted our gods. We are truly exasperated with him."

Whilst they were discussing amongst each other, there came the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and walked to the corner of the Ka'bah in order to touch it for the purpose of tawaf. When he began to make tawaf around the Ka'bah they started to mock him. The Prophet's complexion changed but his attitude remained calm with them and bore it with silence and continued. When he passed by them the second time, they mocked him again. His complexion changed, but he remained silent and continued with the tawaf. When he passed by them the third time, they mocked him again. He realised that gentleness was not working with such people. He went to them and said, "Pay attention, O Quraysh! I swear by the One who has my soul in His hand, I have come to you with slaughter!" The brave Messenger and leader ﷺ said these words and remained standing, facing them.

When the men heard the threat of being slaughtered from the 'most truthful and the most trustworthy one', they jumped up, until every single one sat upright and still, as if a bird was resting on his head, so much so that the harshest of them towards the Prophet ﷺ began to show him gentleness. They said, "Make your way, O Abul-Qasim as a noble man. You were never foolish." Thus, the Prophet ﷺ made his way.

Yes, if it is said to you, "be gentle…", then say, "gentleness has

its place." For one to be gentle at an inappropriate occasion is considered foolishness, although when one closely studies the life of the Prophet ﷺ he realises that he was gentle on most occasions. But be careful! We are not calling for weakness and cowardice. We are only calling for gentleness.

From the memorable examples of gentleness, we can relate that a month after the battle of Badr, Abul-'Aas, the husband of Zaynab the Prophet's daughter, wanted to send her to Madinah to her father. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent Zayd bin Harithah and a man from the Ansar to Makkah and told them to wait at a place near Makkah on the road to Madinah. He said to them, "Wait at Ya'jah until Zaynab passes by you. You should then accompany her and bring her to me."

Abul-'Aas, her husband, ordered her to pack her luggage. She began to collect her belongings, and as she was in the process there came to her Hind bint 'Utbah, the wife of Abu Sufyan. She said to her, "O daughter of Muhammad! Why didn't you tell me you are planning to meet up with your father?"

Zaynab feared that Hind might be plotting against her, so she said, "No. This is not what I am planning to do."

She said, "Dear cousin, if you do want to go and if you ever are in need of something for your journey, or some money in order to be able to get there, then do not be embarrassed to ask me, for the relationship between us isn't like the relationship between men."

Zaynab said, "By Allah, I don't think she said this except because she wanted to plot against me. But I hid my plans and denied that I was going to do that."

When Zaynab packed her luggage, her husband feared that if she went alone, the Quraysh might find out about her departure. Thus, he ordered his brother, Kinanah, to accompany her. Kinanah bin al-Rabi' gave her a camel to ride on. She mounted on the camel as he grabbed his bow and quiver, and began to lead her on their way in broad daylight, as she sat in the howdaj. When the people saw this, some men from Quraysh began to speak about it amongst each other, "How can Muhammad's daughter be allowed to join him when he did what he did to us at Badr?"

Thus they went out looking for her until they found her at a place called Dhu Tuwa. The first one of them to reach her was Hibar bin al-Aswad. He frightened her with his spear as she sat in her howdaj. It said that she was pregnant and as a consequence she miscarried. The disbelievers began to race towards her with their weapons, whilst she had no one except her brother-in-law, Kinanah.

When Kinanah saw this, he sat on the ground, laid his quiver down and picked up his bow ready to shoot. He then said, "I swear by Allah, if anyone of you comes near me I will shoot him with this!" He was a good archer.

The people around him began to waver and retreat, and watched him from afar. Neither was he able to move, nor were the people able to approach him, until it reached Abu Sufyan that Zaynab was heading off to be with her father. Upon hearing this he appeared with a group of noble men from Quraysh. When he saw that Kinanah was ready to shoot and the people were ready to fight him, he shouted, "O man! Point your bow away so we may speak." Kinanah pointed his bow away.

Abu Sufyan then approached him and said, "What you did was not right. You went out with the woman in broad daylight. You know of our suffering and catastrophe at Badr, and what happened to us due to Muhammad. Our noble men were killed and women were widowed. If people see you, and the tribes hear that you left with his daughter in broad daylight in the midst of everyone, they will think of it as another humiliation befalling us, and that this is due to our weakness and flaw. I swear that we have no need to keep her here away from her father. We have no need to exact revenge from her. So go back with the woman, until the voices calm down and the people think that we returned her back to Makkah. You can then secretly take her and return her to her father."

When Kinanah heard this, he was satisfied and returned back to Makkah. She stayed a few nights in Makkah, until voices had calmed down. Soon after this, one night, he took her out and met up with Zayd bin Harithah and his companion. The two of them then brought her to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

Contemplate. How gentle was Abu Sufyan! Look how he succeeded in cooling Kinanah's anger, and preventing him from being killed when perhaps even the daughter of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would not have been spared.

This was Abu Sufyan, who at the time was a disbeliever, so how about the Muslims?

Revelation…

Gentleness beautifies everything. Harshness disfigures.

(54)

Between the living and the dead

There was a man who was extremely burdensome upon others. He was burdensome to his colleagues, his neighbours, his brothers and even his children. He was very unpleasant. He would always hear people saying to him, "Dear brother, you are cold, devoid of emotion!" But he would never respond to them positively.

One day, his son came to him very happy and excited, waving his notebook since his teacher remarked on it, "Excellent!" But the father paid him scant attention, and only said, "O.K? So what? you'd think that it was a PhD!" Obviously, this wasn't quite the response the son expected.

He was a teacher and he had a student in his lesson who was light-hearted. He felt that the lesson (and the teacher) were a bit cumbersome, so he decided to brighten up the atmosphere by making a joke. But the teacher's complexion did not change. He simply said, sarcastically, "Happy now?" Oh that his behaviour with his students was slightly different!

He entered a grocery store where the shopkeeper said to him, "Al-hamdulillah! My family has sent me a letter!" But he did not react. He did not even ask himself why the shopkeeper de-

cided to inform him of this! By Allah, the poor shopkeeper didn't inform him of this except to share his happiness with him.

He visited one of his colleagues who made a cup of coffee for him and then showed him his first newborn, well-wrapped up in a blanket, and if he had been able to wrap him up with his eyelids he would have done! He stood in front of him with his baby and said, "What do you think?" He gave him a cold look and said icily, "MashaAllah… Allah will bless him for you." He then lifted his cup of coffee to drink. Obviously, he was expected to be more responsive, perhaps take the baby in his arms, kiss him and praise his looks and health. However, our friend was quite foolish.

When you deal with people, try to see the importance of matters as they see it, and not how you see it. So the word, 'Excellent' for your son is more precious than a PhD. Your friend's newborn is more precious to him than the entire world. Each time he sees his baby, he feels like opening up his chest so that his son may reside therein. Doesn't your love for your friend dictate that you should share in his moments of happiness, if only a little?

Sometimes, people feel passionate over issues. You should show that you also share their passion over those issues. Do not be cold-hearted and lacking in emotion. Give compliments, respond to their feelings and demonstrate your happiness, sadness or amazement. Do not act like a corpse!

This is why those who are not responsive to others' feelings often complain, "Why don't my children sit with me?" We respond, "Because, they relate a joke to you, but you never re-

spond! They relate their stories from school, but they feel as if they are talking to a wall. Hence, they never feel excited to sit with or speak to you. Even if a person were to mention a story to you which you already know, then there is no reason not to respond to it positively."

'Abdullah bin al-Mubarak said, "By Allah, sometimes a person would relate something to me, and even though I knew of it before his mother gave birth to him, I would still listen to him as if I was hearing this for the first time." How beautiful is this skill!

Just before the battle of Khandaq, the Muslims dug trenches and perfected them. There was a man amongst them whose name was Ju'ayl, but the Prophet ﷺ changed it to 'Amr. As the companions were busy working, they began to sing:

His name he changed, Ju'ayl to 'Amr,

Gave the poor man that day his help.

As they all said, "'Amr", the Messenger of Allah ﷺ joined them and said: "'Amr!"

When they said, "Help", he joined them and said: "Help."

Thereupon, the Companions would become more excited and joyous and feel that the Prophet ﷺ was actually with them.

When night came upon them, the weather became severely cold and they continued to dig, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ went out to them and saw them digging joyfully. Upon seeing the Messenger of Allah ﷺ they sang:

We are those who have pledged our oaths to Muhammad

That we will remain on Jihad for as long as we live!

He said to them in response, "O Allah, the only life is that of the Hereafter, so forgive the Ansar and the Muhajirun."

And so he would continue to respond to their emotions throughout the days.

Once he heard them singing, whilst completely covered in dust:

"By Allah, if it wasn't for Him we would not have been guided

We would not have given charity nor prayed

So send tranquillity upon us

And make our feet firm in the battle

Indeed these people have oppressed us

But never shall we yield if they try to bring affliction upon us.

The Prophet ﷺ would also sing with them saying, "never shall we yield… never shall we yield…" in response to their feelings.

Whenever anyone joked with Prophet ﷺ he would respond by laughing or smiling. Once 'Umar bin al-Khattab ﷺ came to the Prophet ﷺ whilst he was angry with his wives, since they were demanding more stipends. 'Umar – may Allah be pleased with him – thought to himself, "I am going to make the Messenger of Allah laugh!"

He said, "O Messenger of Allah, if you recall us when we were men of Quraysh, we always had our women under control. If any of our women were to ask one of us for more stipend, he would have jumped up and grabbed her neck! But when we

came to Madinah, we found that it was the women keeping their men under control. So our women began to learn these tricks from their women!" Thereupon the Prophet ﷺ smiled. 'Umar continued to speak and the Prophet ﷺ continued to smile.

You read in ahadith that often the Prophet ﷺ would smile till his molar teeth would show. How great was the Prophet's behaviour! As Allah has said, "Indeed, you (O Muhammad) are of a noble character!" and He also said to us, "Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah for you there is a noble example."

The Prophet ﷺ used to deal with all sorts of people, and some of them would not be able to deal with others in a noble manner. Some of them would not respond to his feelings, rather they would be very reserved and hasty. Despite this, he would remain patient with them.

Once, the Prophet ﷺ had stopped over at a place called al-Ji'ranah between Makkah and Madinah. Bilal was with him on his journey. There came a Bedouin to ask the Prophet ﷺ for a need, which the Prophet ﷺ promised to fulfil but ultimately could not. The Bedouin was in hurry so he said, "O Muhammad, won't you deliver what you promised?"

The Prophet ﷺ replied to him in kindness, "Rejoice!"

'Rejoice!' how beautiful a word! Is there a word nobler than this?

But the Bedouin did not respond positively or courteously, and instead shouted with audacity, "I have heard enough of 'Rejoice' from you!"

The Prophet ﷺ was angered at the reply but controlled his

anger. He turned to Abu Musa and Bilal who were sitting next to him and said, "He has refused to rejoice, so please rejoice the two of you."

They said, "We rejoice, O Messenger of Allah."

He asked for a jug of water and washed his hands and face and rinsed his mouth. He then said: "Drink of this water and wash your faces and necks, and rejoice!" meaning, rejoice at receiving the blessings of this water.

They took the jug and did as he said very joyfully. Umm Salamah – may Allah be pleased with her – was sitting near them behind a curtain and wanted to partake in the blessings, so she called out from behind the veil, "Save some for your mother!" So they left some water and sent it to her. She took the water and did as the Prophet ﷺ had said. (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Hence, our beloved Prophet ﷺ was very kind in nature, it was always pleasant to be in his company, and he was always forbearing. He would never make a mountain out of a molehill.

Once the Prophet ﷺ sat down with 'A'ishah –may Allah be pleased with her– who began to relate to him women's talk, as the Prophet ﷺ attentively listened to her. She was speaking at length and in detail, and despite the Prophet's busy life, he kept listening to her with keen interest and commenting where needed, until 'A'ishah –may Allah be pleased with her– finally finished.

So what was the story that 'A'ishah was relating to him?

She was relating a story about a gathering of eleven women in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance who promised not to hide

anything with regards to their husbands. They began to mention everything about their husbands without concealing anything. So what did they say?

The first woman said:

"My husband is like the meat of a useless camel on top of a mountain. It is neither easy to reach to the top of the mountain, nor is the meat good that it should be carried down."

She likened her husband to a difficult mountain on top of which there is unpleasant camel meat, such that no one likes to obtain it due to the difficulty in climbing the mountain. The meat is also very unpleasant in that it is not worth tiring oneself to obtain it. Meaning, he has bad manners and is arrogant, even though he has nothing to be proud of, since he is stingy and poor.

The second woman said:

"I would not describe my husband for fear of leaving him, and if I begin to describe his faults I would be relating terrible things."

Meaning, her husband had many faults and she feared that if she were to describe his faults and the news of it reached him, he would divorce her. She was stuck with him due to her children.

The third woman said:

"My husband is a tall man. If I describe him (and he hears of that) he will divorce me, and if I keep quiet, he will leave me hanging."

Meaning, her husband was tall, ugly and very ill-mannered. He never overlooked her faults and was like the edge of a sword hanging over her. She lived under the constant threat of divorce.

Her words to him were unbearable, and whenever she complained he would divorce her. He would not treat her as a husband should treat his wife. Hence, she was left hanging, neither married, nor divorced.

The fourth woman said:

"My husband is a moderate person like the night of Tihamah which is neither hot nor cold. I am neither afraid of him, nor am I discontented with him."

It is known that the night of Tihamah is neither windy nor dusty, which the inhabitants find quite pleasant. She described her husband as being nice to her and having moderate manners – a man who never hurt her.

The fifth woman said:

"My husband, when entering (the house) is a leopard, and when going out, is a lion. He does not ask about whatever is in the house"

Meaning, when he enters the house he behaves like a leopard. The leopard is considered to be generous and active. When he leaves the house and mixed with the people he behaves like a lion due to his bravery. He was also very tolerant, such that he did not ask detailed questions about what his wife took or spent.

The sixth woman said:

"When my husband eats, he eats too much, and if he drinks he leaves nothing, and if he sleeps he wraps himself up and does not stretch his hands here and there in concern for my sorrow."

Meaning, her husband ate so much that he did not leave anything for his family. He likewise drank too much to leave anything for anyone. When he slept, he wrapped himself up in a blanket leaving none of it for his wife. When she felt sad, he never cared to bring his hand closer to her and be kind to her to find out the reason for her sorrow.

The seventh woman said:

“My husband is a wrong-doer and imprudent and foolish. All defects are present in him. If you speak to him, he may insult you. If you joke with him, he may injure your head or body or both.”

The eighth woman said:

“My husband is like a rabbit to touch (i.e. very soft). He smells like a Zarnab (a kind of good smelling grass). I overpower him, whilst he overpowers the people. (i.e. he was very easy going with her and gave in to her demands, yet, was a hero and therefore overpowered others. He had a strong personality).”

The ninth woman said:

“My husband is a tall generous man wearing a long strap for carrying his sword (i.e. his house is large and always open to his guests). His ashes are abundant (i.e. he is always lighting fires to cook for his guests). His house is near his meeting place (i.e. the place where he meets his friends is near his house out of his concern for his family). He never eats to his fill in a gathering (i.e. he does not eat much when serving the guests). He does not sleep during the night of fear (i.e. if there is danger at night from an enemy, etc, he remains awake to guard and watch).”

The tenth woman said:

“My husband is Malik, and what is Malik? Malik is greater than whatever I say about him. Most of his camels are kept at home and only a few are taken to the pastures. When the camels hear the sound of the lute they realise they are going to perish.”

Meaning, her husband’s name was Malik, and no matter how beautifully she described him, she would not be able to do him justice. His camels were always kept near him and they were hardly taken to pasture so that they were always ready for milking and slaughtering for guests. When the camels heard the sound of the lute, they realised that they were to be slaughtered for the guests.

The eleventh woman said:

“My husband is Abu Zar’, and what can I say about Abu Zar’? He has given me many ornaments and my ears are heavily loaded with them and my arms have become fat. And he has pleased me, and I have become so happy that I feel proud of myself. He found me with my family who were mere owners of sheep and living in poverty, and brought me to a respected family, having horses and camels, threshing and purifying grain. Whatever I say, he does not rebuke or insult me. When I sleep, I sleep till late in the morning, and when I drink water (or milk), I drink my fill. The mother of Abu Zar’ and what may one say in praise of the mother of Abu Zar’? Her saddle bags were always full of provision and her house was spacious. As for the son of Abu Zar’, what may one say of the son of Abu Zar’? His bed is as narrow as an unsheathed sword and a small portion of baby goat meat satisfies his hunger. As for the daughter of Abu Zar’, she is obedient to her father and to her mother. She has a fat well-built body

and that arouses the jealousy of her co-wife. As for the slave-girl of Abu Zar', what may one say of the slave-girl of Abu Zar'? She does not uncover our secrets but keeps them, and does not waste our provisions and does not leave the rubbish scattered everywhere in our house."

She then said, "One day it so happened that Abu Zar' went out at the time when the animals were being milked, and he saw a woman who had two sons like two leopards playing with her breasts. Upon seeing her, he divorced me and married her. Thereafter I married a noble man who used to ride a fast and tireless horse and keep a spear in his hand. He gave me many things, and also a pair of every kind of livestock and said, 'Eat (of this), O Umm Zar', and give provision to your relatives.'"

She then said, while describing her love for her first husband, "Yet, all those things which my second husband gave me could not fill the smallest utensil of Abu Zar's."

This was the end of the long story about the eleven women. We can deduce from this just how long the Prophet ﷺ spent listening to the story from his beloved wife and life-companion, the mother of the believers, 'A'ishah – may Allah have mercy on her.

The Prophet ﷺ was listening attentively, while responding positively and showing his interest and enjoyment as 'A'ishah spoke. He did not exhibit signs of boredom, despite being tired and busy.

When 'A'ishah –may Allah be pleased with her– finished her story, in order to show that he had understood the story, and that he was listening to her and not lost in another world as she was relating it, he said to her in response, "I am to you like Abu

Zar' is to Umm Zar'."

So we agree on the importance of showing kindness and concern for others. From now on, if your son comes to you dressed in a beautiful garment, saying, "What do you think, dear father?" Respond to him positively and say, "SubhanAllah! How beautiful!"

Whoever it may be, your daughter, wife, husband, son or colleague, and whoever you may mix with, be lively and responsive.

Sometimes you may forget an incident. For instance, if a person says to you, "Good news! My father has recovered from his illness!"

Don't respond with, "Actually, when did he fall ill?" Say, "Al-hamdulillah! May Allah give him a great reward and good health. You made me happy by delivering this news, may Allah make you happy!"

Or, if one were to say, "My brother came out prison." Don't say to him, "By Allah, I didn't even know he was in prison." Respond positively by saying, "Al-hamdulillah, this is very good news. May Allah always keep you happy!"

Lastly, dear reader, encouragement and responding positively works even with the animals.

Abu Bakr al-Raqi said, "I was in the desert and I passed by an Arab tribe. There, a man from amongst them took me into his tent as a guest. In the tent, I saw a black slave bound in chains. I also noticed some dead camels in front of the house. There was only one camel left which was about to die.

The slave said to me, 'You are a guest and you have rights

over your host. Please intercede on my behalf to my master, for he is very generous to his guests. He will not reject your intercession and perhaps he will unlock these chains.'

I remained silent since I didn't know what his crime was. When they brought the food, I refused to eat and said, 'I will not eat until I intercede on behalf of this slave.'

The master said, 'This slave has made me poor and destroyed all my wealth.'

'What did he do?' I asked.

He said, 'He has a very beautiful voice. My livelihood is based on these camels. He loaded heavy loads on the camels and began to sing poetry in a very beautiful voice to make the camels go faster, so much so that they travelled a three day journey in a single night. When the camels were unloaded, they all died except one. However, since you are my guest, I would like to offer the slave to you in your honour.' He then stood up and freed the slave from his chains."

Abu Bakr said: "I then desired to listen to his voice, so the next morning I asked him to sing to a camel which was drinking water from a well, so the camel would be active at work. The slave began to sing in a beautiful voice. When he raised his voice, the camel became ecstatic and excited, and forgot itself so much so that it broke its rope. I fell on my face due to his beautiful voice. I do not think I ever heard a voice as beautiful as his." (Ihya 'Ulum al-Din)

If even the animals respond positively to a beautiful voice, which encourages the slave to beautify his voice even more and sing better, then how about human beings?

Develop yourself by training…

Be lively and not dead. Respond positively and with appropriate facial expressions, until others feel comfortable with you.

(55)

Make your tongue sweet

There are always moments in our lives when we must advise and counsel others. One often advises his or her son, husband, friend, neighbour or parents. The end result of the advice usually depends on its beginning.

Meaning, if the advice is given in an appropriate manner with tenderness from the beginning, the end result is often the same. But if it is given harshly and callously, the end result will be similar.

When we are advising people, we are actually dealing with their hearts and not their bodies. This is why, children often take their mother's advice but not the father's, or vice versa and students tend to accept one teacher's advice but not another's.

The very first skill one should use while giving advice is not to do it excessively and pick on every fault, big or small, so that others do not feel that you are constantly watching their every move. Otherwise, they would see you as very cumbersome.

The leader of a people is not the one who is foolish

The leader of a people is the one who pretends to be foolish

If you can present your advice as a suggestion instead, then

you should do so.

For example: your wife brings you dinner and you know that she has tired herself preparing this, and it happens to be very salty. Do not say, "Oh no! What kind of meal is this? I seek refuge in Allah! It seems you emptied out the whole packet of salt in this!"

Rather, you should say, "If you were to have decreased the amount of salt, it would have tasted even better."

Similarly, if you notice your son wearing dirty clothes, then advise him as if you are making a suggestion, because people do not like to be ordered around. Say to him, "How nice would it be if you were to wear better clothes?"

If a student comes late to school, say to him, "How nice would it be for you not to be late again?" This approach is far superior.

Use this approach all the time, "How about if you do this? I suggest you do that…"

This approach is much better than for you to say, "You have no manners! How many times have I told you but you never understand? How much longer do you want me to keep telling you?"

Allow him to retain his honour and make him feel that he is valued, even if he makes mistakes. Do you know why? Because the objective here is to correct the error, and not to take revenge or dishonour him. Meaning, dear reader, to say it plainly, no one likes to be ordered around.

Look at the Prophet's approach in this regard. One day he decided to advise 'Abdullah bin 'Umar to pray the night prayers.

He did not call him and say, "O 'Abdullah, pray the night prayer!" Rather, he advised him as if he was making a suggestion saying, "How nice is 'Abdullah! If only he were to pray the night prayers also!" In another narration he said, "O 'Abdullah, do not be like so-and-so. He used to pray at night, but then he left it."

In fact, if you are able to bring his mistake to his attention without him realising, then this is the best approach. A man sneezed in the company of 'Abdullah bin al-Mubarak but did not say: 'al-Hamdulillah'. So 'Abdullah bin al-Mubarak said, "What does a person say when he sneezes?"

He said, "al-Hamdulillah."

'Abdullah bin al-Mubarak said, "YarhamukAllah" (May Allah have mercy on you).

The Prophet ﷺ had a similar approach. When he would conclude his 'Asr prayer, he would visit his wives one-by-one to sit and talk with them. Once he visited Zaynab bint Jahsh and found honey with her. The Prophet ﷺ used to love honey and other sweets. He began to drink honey and talk to her, and ended up staying with her for longer than he would stay with anyone else.

Thereupon, 'A'ishah and Hafsah became jealous and planned that whoever of the two the Prophet visits should say, "I find that you smell of Maghafir!" Maghafir is a sweet drink, similar to honey but has an unpleasant smell. The Prophet ﷺ was always concerned that his body or mouth did not smell bad, as he used to speak with Jibril and the people.

When he visited Hafsah she asked him what he had eaten. He said, "I had some honey to drink when I visited Zaynab."

She said, "I find the smell of Maghafir on you!"

He said, "No. I only had some honey to drink. But I won't drink it, again."

He then went to 'A'ishah and she said the same to him.

Days went by and Allah finally revealed the secret to the Prophet ﷺ. After a few days, the Prophet ﷺ informed Hafsah of a matter in confidence but she betrayed the confidentiality. He visited her one day whilst she had a guest known as ash-Shifa' bint 'Abdullah. She was a female Companion and a medical student who used to treat patients.

The Prophet ﷺ wanted to bring her attention to her mistake by approaching the issue indirectly, in order to be gentle with her. What did he do?

He said to ash-Shifa', "Wouldn't you teach her the 'incantation of the ants the way you taught her to write?"

The 'incantation of the ants' is what Arab women used to repeat, and everyone knew that it neither harms nor benefits.

The incantation as known amongst the women was composed of the following:

"The bride celebrates, dyes, applies kohl and does everything else, except that she does not disobey her husband"

The Prophet ﷺ wanted to indirectly teach Hafsah a lesson by repeating, "…except that she does not disobey her husband."

How beautiful is this approach towards correcting others' mistakes that leaves love intact in people's hearts, unshaken by errors and unpolluted by excessive offers of advice!

A man borrowed a book from one of the early predecessors. When he returned the book after a few days, it had food-stains on it, as if it had been used to carry bread or grapes. The owner of the book remained silent. After a few days, the same man came to him to borrow another book. He gave him the book in a plate. The man said, "I only want the book. Why are you giving me a plate?"

He replied, 'The book is for you to read, and the plate is for you to carry food in!"

He took the book and went, having learnt the lesson.

I recall a person who used to go home late at night and take his shirt off, hang it on the wall and go to sleep. His wife would then come, open up his wallet and take out the change – one and five Riyal notes. When he would wake up in the morning, go to work and want to pay the grocer, he wouldn't find any change. He would be left surprised, thinking where the money could have gone! He thought about it and got an idea of what might be going on.

One day, he returned home. He had placed a frog in his pocket. He took his shirt off as usual and lay down on the bed as if he was asleep and began to snore, whilst paying attention to what happened to the shirt. His wife came to take whatever she could, as usual. She turned to the shirt very slowly and entered her hand in the pocket and touched the frog. When the frog suddenly moved, she screamed, "Aah! My hand!" The husband opened up his eyes and screamed, "Aah! My pocket!"

If only we applied the same tactics with everyone, including our children and students, when they err!

Nayf is one of my friends. He had a very pious mother. She never used to like having pictures around in the house, because the angels do not enter a house in which there is a dog or a picture. She had a young daughter who used to have all sorts of toys, except a doll. Her mother used to forbid her from buying dolls but allow her to buy anything else. Her maternal aunt once gave her a doll and said, "Play with it in your room but don't let your mother see it!"

After a couple of days, the mother found out, so she decided to give advice in an appropriate manner. When they sat at the dinner table, Umm Nayf said, "Dear children, for a couple of days I feel that there have been no angels in the house! I've no idea why they left! There is neither might nor power except with Allah!"

The young girl listened quietly. After dinner, the young girl returned to her room to notice the doll amongst her many toys. She picked up the doll and brought it to her mother and said, "Mum! This is what caused the angels to leave. You may do with it as you please!"

How wonderful is this approach that one can correct people's wrongs and give advice, being light-hearted without being harsh or cumbersome!

Meaning: Allow the one being advised to retain his honour. It is possible to drink honey without destroying the honeycomb. Do not advise a person as if he has disbelieved due to his actions! Rather, have good thoughts about him and assume that he made a mistake unintentionally, or without knowing.

In the early stages of Islam, alcohol was not prohibited. It was

only prohibited in stages.

In the first stage, Allah declared that alcohol should be despised but He did not forbid it. He said, "They ask you about alcohol and gambling. Say they both contain grave sins and benefits for people."

In the second stage, Allah forbade the people to drink it before the prayer, saying, "Do not approach the prayer whilst you are drunk, so that you realise what you are saying." Thereafter a man could not find the time to drink alcohol due to being busy with the prayer.

In the last stage, Allah said, "Intoxicants and gambling, all are an abomination of Satan's handiwork. Eschew such abomination, that you may prosper." Thereafter, everyone who used to drink abandoned it.

However, some people who used to live outside of Madinah did not know about the absolute prohibition of alcohol. One day, 'Amir bin Rabi'ah, the great Companion, returned from his journey, and presented a bottle of alcohol to the Prophet ﷺ - a bottle full of alcohol!

The Prophet ﷺ never used to drink alcohol, neither in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance nor in Islam. However, the people still used to offer him gifts, some of which he would not use himself but give to others or sell. People would sometimes give him gold and silver, but he would not wear them and instead give them to his wives or others.

The Prophet ﷺ looked at the alcohol in surprise. He turned to 'Amir bin Rabi'ah and said, "Don't you know that this has been forbidden?"

He replied, "Forbidden? No! I didn't know about it, O Messenger of Allah!"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Yes. It has been forbidden."

'Amir then took it away. Some people then suggested to him that he should sell it. When the Prophet ﷺ heard about it, he said, "No. When Allah forbids something, he also forbids its value."

Upon hearing this, the Companion took the bottle and poured the alcohol on the ground.

Be careful of praising yourself while advising others, and ending up elevating yourself while putting the one being advised down. No one likes being treated in this way.

Some fathers, for example, when advising their sons, begin to mention their own achievements and glories, "I used to be this and that…" Perhaps the sons already know the history of their fathers!

So when you are in need of giving an example when advising, try your best not to mention yourself as an example and recall your bravery and glorious actions. Only mention others, such that the one being advised does not feel that you are degrading him and praising yourself.

In short…

"Even a good word is charity," Hadith.

(56)

Be concise and do not argue

They say that the one who advises is like the one who whips. It is only by the virtue of the whip-man's skill that the pain remains. Take note, that I said 'whip-man's skill' and not 'whip-man's strength'! Hence, the aggressive whip-man who whips with all his might inflicts pain on the man only for the moment the whip hits the body. But it isn't long until the man forgets the pain. As for the experienced whip-man, he may not even whip with all his might, but he knows where to whip.

The same is applicable to the one who advises. What matters is not excessive speech or a lengthy advice, but the approach of the one who is advising. Try to shorten your advice as much as you can. If you want to advise him, then do not give him a lecture, especially if it is over an undisputable issue, such as advising someone against anger, drinking alcohol, leaving the prayer, disobeying the parents and so on.

I contemplated the personal advices given by the Prophet ﷺ and noticed that they are not longer than a sentence or two.

For example, "O 'Ali, do not follow a look by another look, for the first look is for you, but the second is not." End of story. This was a very brief piece of advice.

"O 'Abdullah bin 'Umar, be in this world as if you are a stranger, or a wayfarer." End of story. Another very brief piece of advice.

"O Mu'adh! By Allah I love you! Do not forget to say after every prayer: 'O Allah, help me to remember you, thank you and worship you perfectly.'"

"O 'Umar! You are a strong person, so do not jostle through the crowds to reach the black stone."

Similarly, the intelligent people after the Prophet ﷺ would keep their advice brief.

Abu Hurayrah – may Allah be pleased with him – once met al-Farazdaq the poet and said, "Dear nephew! I notice that your feet are small, try to look for a place for them in paradise." Meaning; Try to find a place for yourself in paradise by leaving off slandering chaste women in your poetry.

'Umar – may Allah be pleased with him – was on his death-bed and people were visiting him one after another to bid him farewell and praise his efforts.

There came a young man who said, "Glad tidings, O leader of the believers! Glad tidings of accompanying the Messenger of Allah ﷺ! You strove for Islam as you are aware, then became a just leader, and now you have been martyred."

'Umar replied, "I wish none of this is a proof against me or for me."

When the young man turned around to leave, 'Umar saw his garment dragging on the ground. His garment was hanging below his ankles. 'Umar – may Allah be pleased with him – wanted to

advise the young man, so he said, "Bring the boy back to me."

When the young man came back and stood in front of 'Umar, he said, "Dear nephew, raise your garment, for it is cleaner for your garment and a more pious conduct towards your Lord." (al-Bukhari). End of story. This was a very brief advice, where the message was successfully delivered.

Avoid arguments as much as you can, especially if you feel that the one you are speaking to is arrogant. The objective is only to give him advice and not to initiate a debate. Allah has condemned argumentation by saying, "They raise not the objection save for argument." The Prophet ﷺ said, "No people were misguided after being guided, except that they were made busy with argumentation." He also said, "I guarantee a mansion in the middle of paradise for those who leave off argumentation, even if they are right."

Some people are easily convinced, when they think, but most people have an element of scornfulness and arrogance. The Pharaoh and his people, when they realised the truth, believed in it in their hearts, yet were obstructed by their own arrogance to follow it, Allah said of them, "And they denied them, though their souls acknowledged them, for spite and arrogance."

Your sole objective is to make one aware of his mistake so that he may avoid it in future. Your objective is not to be victorious over him. Neither of you are in a boxing ring.

Once the Prophet ﷺ came to 'Ali and Fatimah – may Allah be pleased with them both – at night, and asked them, "Wouldn't you like to pray?" Meaning; wouldn't you like to pray the night prayer?

'Ali replied, "Our souls are in the Hands of Allah. Whenever He wants to wake us up He will."

The Prophet ﷺ walked away slapping his thigh with his hand, saying, "But man is more than anything contentious." (al-Bukhari)

Sometimes, the one you are advising may say something to excuse himself, and even though the excuse might not be convincing, he would say it anyway just to preserve his honour. Be forbearing, accept his excuse and do not be harsh on him. Do not close all the doors for him. Rather, keep all the doors open for him as you advise him. Even if he says something wrong, you can correct it in a way he doesn't even realise. So begin by praising him, his intelligence and boldness, and then you should say, "however…" followed by your counter-arguments if he was mistaken in what he had said.

Point of view…

Bring the error to his attention succinctly and do not lecture him.

(57)

Do not care about what people say

My son, 'Abd al-Rahman, once kept repeating a phrase I was amazed by. I think at that age he couldn't actually understand what it meant. He used to say, "Ignore, live and let live…" I contemplated on this phrase as I thought about people's criticisms, opinions, and dialogues, and found that people vary in their speech and criticisms.

Amongst them are those who are sincere advisors but are not very skilful, and hence, their approach saddens you rather than making you happy. Amongst them are those who are envious, people who actually intend to sadden you and make you grieve. Amongst them are those who do not know much, and hence, they often do not know what they are saying. It would be better if such people were to remain silent. Amongst them are those whose nature is always to criticise, since they look at life through a dark set of goggles, as it were.

There is an old saying, "If people had the same taste, merchandise would be rendered futile."

It is said Juha once mounted on his donkey while his son walked by his side. As they passed by another group of people, the people said, "Look at this inconsiderate father! He rides the

donkey in comfort while his son is walking by him in the sun!" Juha heard them, stopped the donkey, dismounted and let his son ride instead.

They continued on, and as Juha felt better about himself, they passed by another group of people. One of them said, "Look at this disobedient son! He rides while leaving his father to walk in the sun!" Juha heard them, stopped his donkey and mounted it along with his son to save himself from people's criticism.

They then passed by a people who said, "Look at these inconsiderate people! They do not have pity on the animal!" Juha then dismounted and said to his son, "Dear son, please descend." The son descended and began to walk by his father's side.

They passed by some people who said, "Look at these two foolish people! They are walking whilst no one is riding the donkey! Why was the donkey created if not to be mounted on?'" Juha screamed, and dragged his son. They sat beneath the donkey and lifted it up on their shoulders!

If I had been with him at the time, I would have said to him, "Dear beloved, do as you please and do not care about what others have to say. Pleasing others is an unachievable objective."

Some people do not think thoroughly about their views before suggesting them to others. For example, one of them will come to you after you have been married and say, "Why didn't you propose to such and such woman? Why didn't you marry her?" At this point, you feel like erupting in his face, saying, "Dear brother! I have already got married! End of discussion! No one asked you for your suggestions!"

Or he would come to you after you have sold you car and

say, "If only you were to have informed me earlier! So-and-so would have paid you more." You would say in response, "Dear brother, enough!' I have already sold my car and that is the end of the story. Do not distract me by making me look back!"

Generally speaking,

A man is never without an opponent

Even if he lives alone on a mountain peak

Do not punish yourself.

Experience

One of the predecessors said, "The one who subjects his religion to argumentation changes his opinions very often!"

(58)

Smile and keep smiling

I have known a person for years, as he is one of my work colleagues. Would you believe me if I tell you that to this day I do not know if he has teeth or not! He is constantly frowning and sulking, as if smiling may decrease his age or wealth!

Jarir bin 'Abdullah al-Bajali said, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ never saw me except that he smiled at me."

Smiling is of various types and of different levels.

One type is to be constantly cheerful, where your face is always bright with joy. If you are a teacher and enter the classroom to see your students, meet them with a cheerful face. If you board a plane and walk through the aisle as people look at you, be cheerful. If you enter a grocery store or a petrol station, smile as you pay. If you are in a gathering and there enters a man who greets those sitting with a loud voice and gazes at them, smile. If you meet a group of people and shake their hands, smile.

Generally speaking, smiling plays an important role in suppressing anger and doubt like nothing else does. A brave man is he who is able to control his emotions and smile in the darkest of moments.

One day, Anas bin Malik – may Allah be pleased with him

– was walking with the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ was wearing a Najrani mantle with rough edging. There came a Bedouin running behind the Prophet ﷺ, wanting to catch up with him. When he got close to the Prophet, he pulled him aggressively by his mantle, such that the mantle rubbed hard against his neck.

Anas said, "I looked at the Prophet's neck and noticed a mark due to the edge of his mantle being so roughly pulled across his neck."

So what exactly did the man want? Was his house burning down and he wanted help? Had the pagans attacked his people, and he turned to the Prophet ﷺ horrified, seeking his aid?

Read what he actually wanted…

He said, "O Muhammad!" (Note, he didn't say, "O Messenger of Allah.") Rather he said, "O Muhammad! Give me some of the wealth that Allah has given you!"

The Prophet ﷺ turned around, smiled, and ordered that he be given something.

Yes, he was heroic - he was one who would not be agitated by such behaviour, nor would he punish people over brainless actions. He was easygoing and strong enough to maintain his composure. He was always smiling, even in the darkest of moments. He would consider the consequences before performing any action. What would the benefit have been to have shouted at the man and driven him away? Would that have made his neck feel better? Would it have corrected the man's manners? Never! It never would have had the same effect as patience and forbearance.

Sometimes we become excited and angry over issues that deserve a different approach. We should treat such issues with gentleness, leniency, and a smiling. We ought to think good of others, quash our fury and, ultimately, earn people's pleasure.

The Prophet ﷺ was certainly correct when he said, "The strong man is not the one who is best at wrestling. Rather, the strong person is the one who controls himself when angry."

The noble Prophet ﷺ would attract people merely by smiling and being cheerful. The Muslims marched out on the expedition of Khaybar, and during the battle, a sack full of fat dropped out of the Jews' fortress. 'Abdullah bin Mughaffal collected it, carried it on his back quite happily and made his way to his companions.

On his way, the man responsible for collecting and organising the booty met him and started to pull the sack from him, saying, "Give it to me! This is to be distributed amongst the Muslims!"

'Abdullah held tight to it and said, "By Allah! I will not give it to you! I got it first!"

The man replied, "You will give it to me!" The two of them started pulling on the sack, and while they were doing so, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ passed by them. When the Prophet ﷺ saw them as they were pulling the sack, he laughed and said to the man responsible for the booty, "Leave him alone with the sack." Thus, the man left it in 'Abdullah's hands.

'Abdullah took it to his companions and they ate it all together.

Finally, remember that to smile in your brother's face is an act of charity.

The leader…

"He never saw me except that he smiled…"

(59)

The red lines

One of my students was very well read and always keen to form relationships with others. However, he was also very unpleasant.

He came to me one day and said, "Dear teacher, my colleagues never like me. They cannot bear my sense of humour."

I said to myself, "I cannot bear you when you are silent, so how could I when you speak? Moreover, how terrible are you when you try to be light-hearted and joke?"

I asked him, "Why are they unable to bear your jokes? Give me an example of a joke of yours."

He said, "Once, one of them sneezed, so I said, 'May Allah curse you…' and remained silent. When he became angry I completed my sentence, '… O Iblis! And may Allah have mercy on you, O so-and-so!'"

How unpleasant his joke was, I thought.

Poor man, he thought he was being pleasant and light-hearted by making such jokes!

No matter how much people tolerate your humour and wit, there are always red lines that they would never like you to

cross, especially in front of others. However, some people do not give any consideration to this and often transgress others' sensitivities.

For instance, some people would take your mobile phone and start phoning whoever they like. Others may use it to send text messages to people whom you do not wish to have your number. One of them may drive your car without your permission, or embarrass you by persistently asking for it until you give in unwillingly. You may find a group of students living in a flat and one of them wakes up to go to the university, he finds that so-and-so has already left with his coat, and so-and-so has left with his shoes!

Examples of crossing this red line includes finding some people embarrassing their friends by their unpleasant sense of humour or by asking awkward questions in public. A person, no matter how much he loves you, will always remain a human being who will be happy at times and angry at others.

When the Prophet ﷺ was on his way back to Madinah from Tabuk, there came to him in that same month 'Urwah bin Mas'ud al-Thaqafi. He was a well respected leader and of a noble status among his tribe of Thaqaf. He met with the Prophet ﷺ before he reached Madinah and embraced Islam. He suggested to the Prophet ﷺ that he should go back to his people and call them to Islam. The Prophet ﷺ feared for his wellbeing and said, "They will fight you." The Prophet ﷺ knew that the Thaqaf tribe was zealously averse to Islam and extremely stern in their dealings, even with their leaders.

'Urwah replied, "O Messenger of Allah, I am more beloved

to them than their virgin daughters." He was, indeed very much beloved and obeyed by his people. He went to his people to call them to Islam, hoping that they would not disobey him due to his noble status amongst them.

Upon reaching his people's dwellings, he climbed up an elevated place and called out to them until they all gathered. He called them to Islam and openly declared that he was a Muslim. He began to repeat, "I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

When the people heard this from him, they screamed and became angry about being called to abandon their gods. They shot at him with arrows from all directions until he fell down. Thereupon his nephews came to him as he was breathing his last and said, "O 'Urwah! What do you say regarding the spilling of your blood?" Meaning; shall we avenge your blood by killing those who killed you?

He replied, "This is an honour Allah has bestowed unto me. This is my martyrdom which Allah has brought to me. My case is like the that of the martyrs who were killed in the company of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. So do not kill anyone for me, and do not avenge my blood from anyone."

It is said that when this news reached the Prophet ﷺ, he said regarding him, "He was among his people like Yaseen among his people."

Take notice! People have feelings. No matter how close you get to them, do not be bold with them in your humour or dealings. Avoid the red line. Do not hurt them, no matter how high

they hold you in regard, even if they be like your brothers or sons.

For this reason, the Prophet ﷺ drew our attention to this and forbade us from frightening a believer. One day the Prophet ﷺ was on a journey with his Companions. Each one of the Companions had with him his belongings including weapons, sleeping mats and food. They stopped over at a place and a man amongst them fell asleep. His friend turned to a rope he had and took it jokingly. When the man woke up and found the rope missing from his belongings, he was terrified and began looking for it. Thereupon the Prophet ﷺ said, "It is not allowed for a Muslim to frighten another Muslim." (Abu Dawud)

On another occasion, when the Companions were travelling with the Prophet ﷺ, a man was overcome by slumber whilst mounted on his ride. His friend took advantage of his negligence and took out an arrow from his quiver. The man realised that someone was playing with his weapons, so he became terrified, frightened and alert. Thereupon the Prophet ﷺ said, "It is not allowed for a Muslim to frighten another Muslim." (al-Tabarani and others, reported by reliable narrators).

Similar is the case with someone who jokes with you thinking that you will be happy, whereas in reality, he only harms you, or even worse, fills your heart with fright and anxiety. For instance, he notices that you have just parked your car outside a grocery with the engine running, so he comes and drives off in your car, causing you to think that your car has been stolen - obviously as a joke. The one on the receiving end of such jokes may respond courteously and may even laugh at the joke, but the fact remains

that the joke was still cruel.

A point of view

Whatever goes beyond its limits turns into its opposite.

How often jokes turn into arguments!

(60)

Keeping a secret

A famous old saying goes, "Any secret that passes beyond two is bound to spread." Someone was asked, "Who are 'the two' being referred to here?" He pointed to his two lips and said, "These two!"

During the last thirty-five years of my life, I do not recall whispering into someone's ear a secret, entrusting him there-with, except that that I made him swear an oath that my secret will remain in a bottomless well! Nor do I recall any of them saying to me explicitly, "Dear Muhammad, please forgive me for I am no longer able to keep your secret."

In fact, whenever you inform someone of your secret, he will place his hand on his chest and say, "By Allah! If they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, or a sword on my neck, to inform them of your secret, I would never do so!"

Then, when you feel satisfied and think you can trust him, you reveal your secrets to him. He patiently waits for a couple of months or more before revealing your secrets to others. Your secret begins to travel from person to person until it finally reaches you. You are the one at fault here since your secret should not have passed beyond your lips.

Do not overburden people with what they cannot bear.

When a man's chest is too restricted to contain his own secret

Then even more restricted is the chest of a man entrusted with that secret

I tested many people in that regard and found them to be the same. The problem is that you only go to them for consultation. They first give you advice and then reveal your secrets to others, thereby losing respect in your eyes and becoming the most hated of people to you.

One of the most amazing things to happen in history is that before the battle of Badr, when the Prophet ﷺ heard about Quraysh's caravan approaching from Syria and decided to engage in a battle with the pagans, he marched out with his companions to intercept the caravan. Abu Sufyan was the head of this caravan. When he came to know of the Muslims' advancement, he paid a man called Dhamdham bin 'Amr al-Ghifari and said, "Go and inform Quraysh of the news." Dhamdham headed for Makkah. His journey to Makkah was to take a few days and the people of Makkah were unaware of any of the developments.

One night, 'Atikah bint 'Abd al-Muttalib had a nightmare. The next morning, she called for her brother, al-'Abbas bin 'Abd al-Muttalib and said, "Dear brother, last night I had a terrible nightmare! I feared that it may be indicative of what calamities are to befall your people, so please keep to yourself what I am about to tell you and do not disclose it to anyone."

He said, "Ok. What did you see?"

She said, "I saw a man mounted on a camel who came to the valley of al-Abtah and said in a loud voice: 'March forth, O you who will depart to your own end in three days!'"

She continued, "I saw the people gathered around him. He then moved on until he entered the Mosque whilst the people were following him. Whilst he was still in their midst, he climbed on top of the Ka'bah on his camel and said what he had said before: 'March forth, O you who will depart to your own end in three days!'"

"He then climbed on top of Mount Abu Qays and said the same in a loud voice: 'March forth, O you who will depart to your own end in three days!'"

He then lifted a rock and threw it from the top of the mountain. The rock fell from the top of the mountain, and when it landed at the bottom, it broke into small pieces, and fragments of it entered into every house in Makkah."

Al-'Abbas was shocked and said, "By Allah, that was an astounding dream!"

He feared that the news of this dream may spread and cause harm, so he warned her saying, "Please keep it a secret and do not mention it to anyone."

Al-'Abbas then left with the dream on his mind. On his way, he met al-Walid bin 'Utbah, who was his friend. He shared the nightmare with him and said, "Please keep it a secret and do not tell anyone!"

Al-Walid went off, met his son 'Utbah and told him of the nightmare.

It didn't take long until 'Utbah disclosed it to some of his friends, and from there the news began to spread amongst the people of Makkah until it became the subject of discussion in the gatherings of Quraysh.

The next morning, al-'Abbas went to the Ka'bah to perform tawaf to find Abu Jahl sitting amongst a group of people from Quraysh under the shade of the Ka'bah, discussing 'Atika's nightmare! When Abu Jahl noticed al-"Abbas he said, "O Abu-Fadhl! Please come to us when you have finished your Tawaf."

Al-'Abbas became surprised as to why Abu Jahl would like to speak to him. He could not have conceived that he would ask him about 'Atika's nightmare. Al-'Abbas performed his tawaf and went off to Abu Jahl's gathering.

When he approached them and sat down, Abu Jahl said to him, "O Banu 'Abd al-Muttalib, when did you have this new prophetess?"

"What do you mean?" asked al-'Abbas.

Abu Jahl replied, "I am speaking of the nightmare 'Atika had."

Al-'Abbas became alarmed and said, "What nightmare did she have?"

Abu Jahl said, "O Banu 'Abd al-Muttalib! Isn't it enough that your men are claiming Prophethood. It seems that now even your women are doing so! 'Atika claims that she saw in a dream a man saying: 'March forth in three days!' So we will wait for three days, and if what you say is true, then we will see it happen. But if three days pass by and nothing happens, then we will write

a declaration saying that you are the most untruthful family in speech amongst the Arabs!"

Al-'Abbas became worried and did not say anything in response. He also denied knowledge of the nightmare, and denied that she ever saw a dream.

They then left the gathering. When al-'Abbas entered his house, every single woman in the Banu 'Abd al-Muttalib family came to him in anger saying, "You've allowed this evil and wretched man to insult your men, and now he begins to insult your women and you simply sit there, listening to all of this! Do you not have a sense of honour for your people?"

Al-'Abbas became zealous and excited and said, "By Allah! If Abu Jahl says that again, I will do this and that!"

Three days after 'Atika's nightmare, al-'Abbas entered the mosque in anger. Upon entering the mosque he saw Abu Jahl and decided to go to him to respond to his words. However, he noticed Abu Jahl leaving the mosque in hurry and was surprised. He had been ready to argue and quarrel with him. Al-'Abbas said to himself, "What is wrong with him? May Allah curse him! Is he rushing out because he is afraid that I will insult him?"

However, Abu Jahl had heard the voice of Dhamdham bin 'Amr al-Ghifari, who was sent by Abu Sufyan to seek the aid of the people of Makkah. Dhamdham was shouting from the valley, mounted on his camel. He had inflicted injury on the camel's nose such that it was bleeding. He had torn up his shirt and was shouting, "O Quraysh! The merchandise! The merchandise! Your merchandise is with Abu Sufyan, which is going to be intercepted by Muhammad and his companions! I don't see you coming to

their aid in time!" He then shouted at the top of his voice, "Help! Help!"

The Quraysh then prepared for the battle and marched forth, and the defeat and the humiliation they endured in the end is something well known.

Consider how a secret was spread in the blinking of an eye, despite of all the efforts to keep it a secret!

Another story about disclosing the secrets is when 'Umar – may Allah be pleased with him – accepted Islam and wanted to spread the news far and wide. He approached a man who was well known for spreading news. He said, "O so-and-so, I am going to tell you a secret, so please keep my secret!"

He said, "What is your secret?"

'Umar replied, "I have accepted Islam, so be careful that you do not inform anyone!"

As soon as 'Umar left him, the man began to go from people to people saying, "Did you know that 'Umar has embraced Islam? Did you know that 'Umar has embraced Islam?"

How bizarre! He was like a mobile news agency!

One day, the Prophet ﷺ sent Anas to do something for him, and on his way he passed by his mother. His mother asked him, "What did the Prophet ﷺ despatch you for?"

He said, "By Allah, I will never reveal the secret of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ."

Therefore, the Prophet ﷺ would teach his Companions to keep secrets so that they be responsible people. This is how seri-

ous Anas was in keeping secrets, even when he was very young. Perhaps you may not find anyone like Anas today!

'A'ishah – may Allah be pleased with her – said, "Fatimah once came to us walking as the Prophet ﷺ would walk. The Prophet ﷺ said to her, 'Welcome, my dear daughter!' He then sat her down, either to his right or left and told her a secret which made her cry. He said to her, 'Why are you crying?'

He then told her another secret and she laughed. I thought to myself, 'I have never seen joyous feelings mixed with sadness in a person like this!'

'I asked Fatimah about what the Prophet ﷺ had told her'.

She said: 'I will not reveal the secrets of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.'

When the Prophet ﷺ passed away, I asked her about it and she said: 'He told me in confidence that Jibril revises the Qur'an with him once a year, but this year he revised it twice. I see it as an indication of my death. You will be the first of my household to join me.'

'When I heard this I cried. He then said to me: 'Wouldn't you like to be the leader of the women of Paradise or the leader of the believing women?'

When I heard this I laughed.'"

You are valued by your ability to keep secrets, for then the people will trust you and open up their hearts to you. Your status will increase in their eyes and they will look at you as a trust-worthy person. Hence, train yourself to keep your own secrets and that of others.

It is said

The one who knows your secrets enslaves you.

(61)

Fulfilling people's needs

When I began my Masters degree thesis, I read a great number of heresiographical works. One of the philosophical schools I read about was known as pragmatism.

When I studied this thought deeply, I realised why we hear that in Europe and America the son abandons his father, and if he sees him in a restaurant, each of them pay for their own meal. Their philosophy says,

"If you are not serving my interests, why should I serve you? Why should I spend my money on you? Why should I spend my time on you and struggle without any material gain?"

Islam turned this idea upside down. Allah said, "Be good to others, for Allah loves those who are good."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "For me to walk with my brother to fulfil his need until it is fulfilled is more beloved to me than making it'ikaf in this mosque of mine for a month!" He also said, "The one who helps his brother in need, Allah helps him when he is in need."

The Prophet ﷺ would be walking in the street and a slave-girl would stop him, saying, "I need your help." He would remain with her until he would hear her needs. He would then go with

her to her master to fulfil her needs. In fact, the Prophet ﷺ used to mix with people and have patience over their harms. He used to treat them all with a merciful soul, tearful eyes, a preaching tongue and a loving heart. He would feel that he and others were one body. He would feel the poor man's poverty, the sad person's grief, the ill man's disease and the needy one's needs.

Just look at how, as he s sat in his mosque speaking to his Companions, he would see a group of people coming to him from afar. He ﷺ would notice that they were a group of poor people coming from Mudhar in the direction of Najd. Due to their extreme poverty, they were wearing garments made of wool having white and black stripes. Some of them would find a piece of cloth, but wouldn't have the money to buy a needle and thread in order to stitch it together. Therefore, they would tear it from the middle, poke their heads through the hole, and allow the garment to fall and cover their bodies. They had come wearing such garments, with their swords hanging around their necks. They did not have any lower garments, turbans, or cloaks.

When the Prophet ﷺ saw how they hard they were struggling and that they had nothing to wear or eat, his complexion changed. He stood up and went off to his house but couldn't find anything to give in charity. He left and entered another one of his houses, looking for something to give, but couldn't find anything there either.

He then went to the mosque, prayed the Dhuhr prayer and climbed up to the pulpit. He thanked and praised Allah and said, "To proceed, Allah has said in His Book:

'O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord Who cre-

ated you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from them two has spread abroad a multitude of men and women. Be careful of your duty toward Allah in Whom you claim (your rights) of one another, and toward the wombs (that bear you). Indeed! Allah has been a watcher over you.'

He then recited:

'O you who believe! Observe your duty to Allah. And let every soul look to that which it sends on before for the morrow. And observe your duty to Allah. Indeed! Allah is Aware of what you do.'

He recited more verses, admonished the believers and said in a loud voice, "Give in charity before you are unable to give it anymore! Give in charity before you are prevented from doing so!" A man gave charity from his Dinar, another gave from his Dirham, another gave from his wheat and another gave from his barley. He further said, "Let no one of you belittle whatever you give in charity." He began to mention the various items people may give in charity until he mentioned, "… even if it were a piece of date." A man from the Ansaar rose with a package in his hand, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ took hold of it while he was on the pulpit. When the Prophet ﷺ took it, a sense of joy was apparent on his face.

He said, "Whoever initiates a good practice and acts accordingly he will have its reward along with the reward of anyone who acts according to that practice, without there being any decrease in their reward. And whoever initiates a bad practice and acts accordingly, he will bear its burden along with the burden of all those who act according to it, without there being any

decrease in their burdens."

The people got up, left for their homes and returned with charity. One came with a Dinar, another came with a Dirham, another came with dates whilst another came with clothes, until two piles accumulated in front of the Prophet ﷺ - a pile of food and a pile of clothes. When the Prophet ﷺ saw this, his face brightened like the moon. He then divided it up amongst the poor people. (Muslim)

Yes! The Prophet ﷺ used to enter people's hearts by fulfilling their needs. He would spend his strength, time and his wealth for their sake.

When 'A'ishah was asked about the Prophet's behaviour at home, she said, "He would either be fulfilling the needs of his family members, or serving them."

Wouldn't you like to make your way into people's hearts by fulfilling their needs?

If a person needs to go to the hospital, you should take him to the hospital. If another asks for your help in a problem, you should help him out. Let him see you fulfilling his needs and standing by him during his mishaps, whilst he knows that you do not hope for any reward or even thanks! Due to this he would love you and pray for you. He would also always be ready to help you if you were ever in need.

An opinion

The one who lives for others surely has a hard life, but he will live nobly and die nobly.

(62)

Do not burden yourself with what you cannot do

One of my friends is one of the best people in terms of his manners, religious commitment and intelligence. He was an Imam of a mosque right next to his house. However, I often used to hear him criticised by many people and be amazed at that, yet unable to find a justification.

One day, his neighbour came to me and said, "Dear Shaykh! Your friend neither leads us in prayer nor prays along with us!"

I said, "Why is that?"

He replied, "I don't know, but he is the Imam, and despite this, he is often absent from the mosque."

I began to make excuses for him and said, "Perhaps, he is busy with something very important, or perhaps he isn't at home."

He said, "Dear Shaykh! His car is parked outside his house and I am quite certain that he is home, yet he does not attend the prayers with us, in spite of being the Imam!"

I began to investigate into my friend's reasons for not praying in the mosque until I found the answer. The man, being an Imam of the mosque, would have everyone coming to him asking for help.

One man would come to him with debts and ask him to find someone who could pay them. Another who has just finished his secondary school would want him to be a character reference for admission into university. Another is ill and he needs his help to be admitted into such-and-such a hospital. Another has daughters for whom he is looking for husbands. Another has to pay his rent and needs help. Another wants him to write a legal query over a divorce issue which he can then take to the Grand Mufti. Many people with many needs come to him, but he is just an ordinary person who is neither able to do much himself, nor does he have many contacts, or even social status.

The poor man was overcome with shame and embarrassment when dealing with people, such that he was never able to excuse himself from others. Rather, he would speak to a person and promise him that he would pay off his debts. He would take the second person's phone number and promise him that he would be accepted at the university. He would tell the third person, "Come after a couple of days and you will find a letter addressed to the hospital ready", and so on.

They would return to him as promised, but he would excuse himself and give them another appointment, until he began to avoid them. He would not answer his phone calls and often not even leave his house! When one of them would meet him by chance, he would insult him and shout, "OK, but why did you promise me? Why did you raise my hopes?"

The second person would say, "I did not speak to anyone else only because you had promised me!"

When I saw his situation, I realised that he had dug a hole for

himself and fallen therein. I once heard him excusing himself to someone, "I am sorry. I haven't been able to do anything regarding your case", while the person would reply in anger, "OK, but you wasted my time! Why didn't you tell me before?" There I remembered a wise saying, "Excusing oneself at the outset is far better than excusing oneself at the end."

How excellent it is for a man to realise his limited abilities and to move within those limits? Allah teaches us this lesson and says, "Allah does not burden a soul more than it can bear", and also says, "Allah does not burden a soul more than what He has given it." The Prophet ﷺ also forbade that a man should burden himself with more than what he can bear.

I have experienced this myself. I remember once giving a lecture in a police convention in Riyadh. After the lecture, one of them came to me and said, "Dear Shaykh, I need your help regarding a very important matter."

I said, "Go ahead, what is it?"

He said, "I cannot tell you now, but we must meet again when we have more time." He was speaking as if the matter was very important as I listened with interest.

My life has taught me that many people give a lot more importance to issues than they deserve. This person who came to me was fanatical about his problem. He said to me, "I think you have a lecture tomorrow in such-and-such a city." The city was about 200 km from Riyadh.

"Yes", I replied.

He said, "I will come to see you there and meet up with you

after your lecture."

I was stunned at his eagerness. As I left after delivering the lecture, he came after me in a hurry, barefoot, with a small piece of paper in his hand.

I stood by his side and said, "Go ahead. May Allah reward you for your eagerness, but what do you need?"

He said, "Dear Shaykh, I have a brother who only has primary education certificate, and I would like you to find him a job."

I said, "Is that it?"

He said, "Yes, that's it."

The man seemed really keen and his appearance made me pity him. It seemed as though his brother was going through a rough period. However, I knew that if I promised him anything, I would not have been able to keep it. We are living in times where one with a bachelor's degree cannot find work, let alone someone with a primary education certificate. I knew the limits of what I could do. It was an embarrassing moment for me, and I wished that I really could do something to help this grieving person's need. However, I literally was able to do nothing, so I said to him, "Dear brother, by Allah, I want to help you. Your brother is my brother. I feel for him as you do. However, I am not able to help you at all. I hope you can graciously excuse me."

He said, "Dear Shaykh, please, at least try."

I said, "I am sorry, I cannot."

He then gave me the piece of paper in his hand and said, "Okay, dear Shaykh, just take this piece of paper with our phone numbers. If you ever find a job, please give us a ring." I realised

that he still wished to have hope in me. I knew that if I took the numbers, he would continuously wait for my call, pin his hopes, and encourage his brother to do the same.

I said, "Actually, keep the piece of paper and take my number down, and if you find a job for him then please give me a call. Perhaps, I will write a recommendation letter to the employer for him to be accepted."

The man remained silent for a while as I waited for him to say goodbye. I was surprised when he then said to me, "May Allah brighten your face! By Allah, dear Shaykh, I have previously spoken to Prince so-and-so about the matter a year ago. He took the piece of paper and still hasn't called me! Once I spoke to Major General so-and-so, and he too took the piece of paper and didn't call me or even care about me. These people do not care about the weak! Allah will seek revenge from them!"

When he began to pray against them, I thought to myself, "Al-Hamdulillah, if I had taken the piece of paper, I would have been the third person to be prayed against!"

Yes, to excuse oneself from the outset is to keep one's promise. How excellent it is to be straightforward with people, knowing and acknowledging the limits of what one can do. This does not only apply to people's needs in general, but also to small needs involving the wife or the children. Sometimes, as you leave the house, your wife shouts out, "Please, buy milk, sugar and tonight's dinner!"

Be careful and do not keep repeating, "OK, I will", knowing that you are not able to. Rather, you should call out to her, saying, "I cannot", for this is better than making excuses upon your

return, such as, "I didn't have time… The shops closed… I forgot…" The same applies to your colleagues and brothers. I hope you get the idea.

Experience…

Excusing oneself at the outset is far better than excusing oneself at the end.

(63)

Who kicked the cat?

Before you answer this question, read the story in full.

A person used to work as a secretary for a very ill-mannered manager who did not have a single skill of dealing with people. This manager used to accumulate his workload and take upon his shoulders burdens he could not bear.

One day, he called his secretary, so he entered and stood in front of him.

The secretary said, "Yes. How may I help, sir?"

He said, "I called your phone but you never answered!"

The secretary replied, "That was because I was in the other room. I am sorry, sir!"

He replied, "You are always saying sorry! Take these papers and give them to the head of the repair department, and return quickly!"

The secretary, being annoyed, went to the office of the repair department's head and threw the papers on his desk and said, "Do not take long with these papers!"

The man became irritated at the secretary's behaviour and said, "OK, but please, place them on the table appropriately!"

The secretary replied, "Appropriately or inappropriately, it does not matter! What is important is that you finish with the papers quickly!"

They argued and insulted each other until voices were raised, after which the secretary went back to his office. After a couple of hours, one of the minor workers in the repair department went to his Head and said, "I will now go to collect my children from school and return shortly."

The Head shouted saying, 'You go out everyday!"

He replied, 'This is what I have been doing for ten years! This is the first time you are objecting."

The Head said, "You only listen when you are being told off! Go back to your office!"

The poor man went to his office, perplexed at this attitude, and began to call people to arrange someone to pick up his children from the school and take them home, but found nobody. The children had to stand for a long time in the sun until one of the teachers decided to take them home.

When this employee returned home angry, his youngest son came to him with a toy and said, "Dad! My teacher gave this to me, because I…"

"Go to your mum!" says the father, interrupting him and pushing him away.

The child goes to his mother crying, and on his way, his beautiful cat comes to him and begins to rub itself against his legs as usual, but he kicks the cat with his foot and the cat ends up hitting the wall.

Question: Who kicked the cat?

Perhaps you will smile and say, "The manager."

That's right, it is the manager, because he pressurised himself so much that he eventually exploded.

Why do we not learn the skill of distributing our workload? Why can't we say with courage about the tasks that we cannot perform, "This is out of our hands… We aren't able to do this…" especially when placing yourself under pressure may result in you behaving in a way that adversely affects people who were not part of the problem to begin with.

Be careful to not allow yourself to be pressurised by others, such that they embarrass you until you give in to their demands, or make empty promises.

Come with me to Madinah, if you please, and look at the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, as he sat in his blessed gathering, after Islam had spread far and wide and the people worshipped Allah alone. The leaders of various tribes came to him in submission as believers, whilst some came to him disguising hate and malice in their hearts.

One day, one of the Arab leaders came to him. He was very well respected amongst his people. His name was 'Amir bin al-Tufayl. His people, when they noticed how Islam had spread, would suggest to him, "O 'Amir, most people have become Muslim. You may as well embrace Islam."

'Amir was very arrogant and haughty. He would say to them in response, "By Allah, I have already sworn that I will not die until the Arabs make me their king and follow me, for I am not

going to follow this young man from Quraysh!"

Later when he saw that Islam had dominated and the people had agreed to follow the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, he mounted his camel and went along with his companions to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. When he entered the mosque, he saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ sitting with his Companions. He stood in front of the Prophet ﷺ and said, "O Muhammad! I want to speak to you alone."

The Prophet ﷺ was cautious of such people, so he said, "No, by Allah! Not until you believe in Allah alone."

He said again, "O Muhammad, I want to speak to you alone." But the Prophet ﷺ refused.

But he kept insisting, "O Muhammad, come with me so I may speak to you!" So the Prophet ﷺ eventually got up to speak to him.

As he got up, 'Amir pulled one of his companions over to him. His name was Arbad, whom 'Amir conspired with to kill the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He had said to him, "I will keep him busy while you strike him with a sword from behind."

Thus, Arbad placed his hand on his sword in preparation. As the Prophet ﷺ stood and spoke with 'Amir alone, next to a wall, Arbad grabbed his sword. But each time he wanted to unsheath the sword, his hand would become stiff, and thus he wasn't able to do it.

'Amir was keeping the Prophet ﷺ busy and looking at Arbad at the same time, whilst Arbad remained stiff, unable to move. The Prophet ﷺ turned to Arbad to see what he was doing, and

then turned to ‘Amir and said, “O ‘Amir bin al-Tufayl, accept Islam.”

‘Amir replied, “O Muhammad, what would you give me in return for becoming a Muslim?”

The Prophet ﷺ replied, “You will have what all the Muslims have and you would be expected to do what all the Muslims are expected to do.”

‘Amir said, “Do you agree to give me authority after you, if I was to embrace Islam?”

The Prophet ﷺ did not want to promise ‘Amir that which might not be fulfilled. Hence, he was boldly straightforward with him and said, “Authority is neither for you nor for your people.”

‘Amir attempted to make his demands more plausible, so he said, “I will accept Islam if you give me authority over the Bedouins and you keep authority over the cities.” But the Prophet ﷺ did not want to oblige himself with a promise would not fulfil. Thus, he said, “No.”

Thereupon, ‘Amir became angry, his complexion changed and shouted at the top of his voice, “I shall fill your spaces with men and cavalry and tie a horse to every tree. I will attack you with two thousand horses!” He then left, foaming at the mouth and screaming.

The Prophet ﷺ looked at him and then raised his gaze to the sky and said, “O Allah, suffice me of Amir’s evil and guide his people.”

‘Amir set off with his companions until he left Madinah head-

ing towards the dwellings of his people, intending to go back and prepare an army to attack Madinah. During the way, he became tired and the signs of exhaustion became apparent on him. He needed a place to rest, and by chance, he was passing by a woman from his people, known as Saluliyyah who used to live in a tent. She was known as a debauched woman. She was condemned by the people and whoever entered her house was accused of debauchery and evil.

Since, 'Amir could not find a place to stay, he had no choice but to descend from his horse and sleep in her house. Overnight, he caught a disease in the thyroid gland near his throat which usually afflicts camels and due to which they die. He became terrified and confused. He began to feel his tumour and say, "It is the sort of tumour that camels get, and it is death in the house of Saluliyyah!" Meaning, it was neither an honourable death, nor was the place honourable.

He wished that he could be killed in a battle, struck by the swords of brave men. Yet, there he was, dying of a disease that usually afflicts animals, and in the house of a debauched woman! Woe to this humiliation and disgrace!

He screamed to his companions, "Bring me my horse!"

When they brought him his horse, he mounted it and took hold of his spear. He began to roam around on his horse, while screaming in pain. He kept feeling his throat with his hands and saying, "It is the sort of tumour that camels get, and it is death in the house of Saluliyyah!" He continued moving about on his horse in this manner until he eventually fell from his horse, dead.

His companions left him and went back to their people. When they entered their dwellings, the people came to Arbad and asked him what happened.

He said, "Nothing much. Muhammad called us to worship something… I wish I was with him now, so I could shoot him with an arrow and kill him!"

SubhanAllah! How audacious!

A couple of days after he had said this, he left to sell his camel. Allah struck him and his camel with lightning, which annihilated both of them.

Allah revealed with respect to 'Amir and Arbad, "Allah knows that which every female bears and that which the wombs absorb and that which they grow. And everything with Him is measured. He is the Knower of the Invisible and the Visible, the Great, the High Exalted. Alike of you is he who hides the saying and he who noises it abroad, he who lurks in the night and he who goes freely in the daytime. For him are angels ranged before him and behind him, who guard him by Allah's command. Indeed, Allah changes not the condition of a folk until they (first) change that which is in their hearts; and if Allah wills misfortune for a folk there is none that can repel it, nor have they a defender beside Him. He it is Who shows you the lightning, a fear and a hope, and raises the heavy clouds. The thunder hymns His praise and (so do) the angels for awe of Him. He launches the thunderbolts and smites with them whom He will while they dispute (in doubt) concerning Allah, and He is mighty in wrath. Unto Him is the real prayer. Those unto whom they pray beside Allah respond to them not at all, save as (is the response to) one who stretches

forth his hands towards water (asking) that it may come unto his mouth, and it will never reach it. The prayer of disbelievers goes (far) astray."

Yes! Do not commit yourself to anything unless you are sure that you are able to deliver, with Allah's aid.

One day the Prophet ﷺ was delivering a sermon. During it, he spoke about the Last Day and what will happen therein. He then raised his voice and said, "O Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad! Ask of my wealth whatever you like, for I will be of no help to you when you deal with Allah!"

Lastly, having emphasised that one should not commit himself unless he is sure he can deliver, it is also important that we excuse ourselves in an appropriate manner.

For instance, if a man comes to you asking your help in finding his brother a job because either you, your father, or your brother happens to be a well-known person, and you feel that you cannot deliver, then excuse yourself in a way in which he can preserve his honour, where he feels that you share his agony.

For example, you can say to him, "Dear brother, I feel your suffering. I consider your brother as my own. If I have five brothers, then he surely is the sixth. However, the problem is that I cannot do anything at the moment. So please excuse me, although I do pray to Allah that He helps him." You should say this with a gentle smile and the right facial expressions, as if by responding to him in this manner, you have already delivered what he needed, isn't that so?

A point of view…

Be straightforward with yourself and bold with people. Know your own abilities and keep to your limits.

(64)

Humbleness

I was in a gathering with a few elite people. One of them, who saw himself self-sufficient, began to speak, during which he said, "I passed by a worker and he extended his hand to shake my hand. I hesitated a little, but then shook his hand." He then said with all pride, "Although, I do not tend to shake hands with anyone and everyone!"

MashaaAllah! He said, "I do not shake hands with anyone or everyone!"

As for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, then a weak slave-girl would meet him on his way and complain of her owners' oppression and the amount of work she had to do. The Prophet ﷺ would set out with her to see her owners' and to mediate on her behalf.

He used to say, "No one with an atom's weight of arrogance will enter Paradise!"

How many times is it that we hear people say, "Dear brother, so-and-so is arrogant and thinks far too much of himself!" They hate and condemn him for his attitude.

You may ask a person, "Why don't you ask your neighbour's help?"

He would say, "He is very arrogant with us. He does not even

like to speak to us with a straight face!"

How hated these people are – they who are arrogant and talk down to others! How rejected is the one who transgresses because he sees himself as self-sufficient!

He is the one who puts on a contemptuous look for the people and walks through the land exultantly. He is the one who looks down on workers, servants and poor people. He is too arrogant to speak to them, shake their hands or sit with them.

When the Prophet ﷺ entered Makkah as a conqueror, he began to pass by all the passages where he was abused and ridiculed. How often did he hear in those valleys, "O madman! O magician! O soothsayer! O liar!" On that day, he passed through them as a powerful leader. Allah had humiliated those who had insulted him in front of his eyes.

How did he feel as he entered Makkah?

'Abdullah bin Abu Bakr – may Allah be pleased with him and his father – said, "When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ reached Dhi Tuwa, he stopped, whilst still mounted on his ride, wearing a red mantle. And there he was, bowing his head in humility, upon witnessing the victory Allah had blessed him with, such that the end of his beard was almost touching his saddle."

Anas – may Allah be pleased with him – said, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ entered Makkah on the Day of Conquest whilst his chin was touching his ride out of humility."

Ibn Mas'ud – may Allah be pleased with him –said, "A man came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and spoke to him regarding a matter. Whilst speaking to the Prophet ﷺ, the man shivered."

Seeing this, the Prophet ﷺ said, "Take it easy! I am just a son of a woman from Quraysh who used to eat dried meat."

He also used to say, "I sit as a slave sits and I eat as a slave eats."

In short…

Whoever is humble for Allah's sake, Allah elevates him. Allah only increases the honour of the one who is humble.

(65)

To worship in secret

On a cold winter's night about ten years ago, I was out in the desert with friends. One of our cars had broken down, so we had no choice but to stay out in the cold. I recall that we lit a fire and sat around it together. How pleasant are winter discussions when sitting around a campfire!

As our discussions protracted, I noticed that one of the brothers gently slipped out of our circle. He was a very pious man who used to perform acts of worship in secret. I would notice that he would go to the Jumu'ah prayers very early, sometimes so early that even the doors of the mosque would not have yet been opened!

He got up and took a pot full of water. I thought that perhaps he had gone to relieve himself. When he delayed his return for longer than usual, I got up to see where he was, only to find him far away from us. He had wrapped himself up with a cloak due to the extreme cold and was in the state of prostration on the sand, in the dark of the night, all on his own.

It was as if he was begging for Allah's mercy and love. It was obvious that he loved Allah, and I think Allah loved him, too. I realised that to worship in secret honours a person in this world

before being honoured in the Hereafter.

Years have passed since then, and I still know him. Allah has made him much appreciated amongst the people. He participates fully in da'wah projects and guiding the people. When he walks about in a marketplace, I see the younger generation race to him to shake his hand, out of love and respect, before the older generation do!

How many businessmen, princes and famous people wish that the people would love them as they love this person, but how far from the mark they are!

You refuse to spend the night with a candle lit and sleep instead

And then you still expect to meet Me (Allah)?

Yes! As Allah says "Lo! Those who believe and do good works, the Beneficent will appoint for them love." Meaning, Allah will cause the people to love them, for when Allah loves you, He makes you appreciated on the earth.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "When Allah loves a person, he calls out to Jibreel and says, 'I love this person, so love him.' Thus, Jibreel begins to love him. Then Jibreel calls out to the inhabitants of the heavens and says, 'Allah loves this person, so love him.' Thus, the inhabitants of the heavens love him. Then this love descends into the hearts of people. This is what Allah means when He says, "Indeed, those who believe and do good works, the Beneficent will appoint for them love."

When Allah hates a person, He calls out to Jibreel saying, 'I hate this person, so hate him.' Thus Jibreel hates him. He then

calls out to the inhabitants of the heavens and says, 'Allah hates this person, so hate him.' Thus, the people of the heavens hate him. Then this hatred descends into the hearts of people." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

How beautiful it is that you live, eat and drink in this world and at the same time Allah calls out your name in the heavens saying, "I love him, so love him!"

Az-Zubayr bin al-'Awwam – may Allah be pleased with him – said, "Whoever of you is able to keep his righteous deeds a secret, then let him do so."

Secret worship can be done in various ways. You can perform it by regularly praying the night prayers, even if it be one unit of prayer every night, which you pray immediately after 'Isha, or before you go to bed, or before Fajr, just so that you are known by Allah to be from those who pray the night prayer.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah is odd and He likes that which is odd. So pray the odd prayers (at night), O people of the Qur'an!"

From the secret acts of worship you can perform is to make peace between people, such as your quarrelling colleagues, neighbours, or a husband and wife.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Shall I not inform you of a station better than praying, fasting and giving in charity?"

People said, "Please, do."

He replied, "To make peace between people, and to cause enmity between people is what erodes things."

Also from the secret acts of worship you can perform is

to remember Allah much, for whoever loves something always remembers it. The Prophet ﷺ said in a hadeeth, "Shall I tell you about the best of deeds, the most pure in the sight of your Lord, and the one that is of the highest order and far better for you than spending gold and silver (in charity)? It is even better for you than meeting your enemies on the battlefield where you strike at their necks and they at yours?"

The Companions replied, "Yes, O Messenger of Allah! What is it?"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Remembrance of Allah."

Also from the secret acts of worship you can perform is to give charity in secret, for to give charity in secret extinguishes Allah's anger.

Whenever Abu Bakr – may Allah be pleased with him – prayed Fajr, he would then go out into the desert to collect something before returning to Madinah. 'Umar – may Allah be pleased with him – would be surprised as to why he would leave, so he decided one day to follow him secretly. After Fajr that day, he saw Abu Bakr leaving Madinah and arriving at an old tent in the desert. 'Umar hid behind a huge rock to see what was about to happen.

Abu Bakr spent very little time in the tent and then left. 'Umar then emerged from behind the rock and entered the tent to find a weak and blind woman with small children.

'Umar asked her, "Who is this person who comes to you?"

She said, "I don't know him. He is just an ordinary Muslim man. He has been coming to us every morning since such-and-

such a time."

'Umar said, "So what does he do for you?"

She replied, "He cleans the house, prepares the dough, milks our animals, and then leaves."

'Umar ﷺ then left, saying to himself, "You have left the Caliphs who will succeed you exhausted, O Abu Bakr! You have left the Caliphs who will succeed you exhausted!"

'Umar ﷺ himself was not that far below Abu Bakr's level of worship and devotion. Once Talhah bin 'Ubaydullah saw 'Umar leaving his house in the darkest hour of the night and then enter several houses, one after the other. Talhah became surprised and thought what 'Umar could be doing in these houses.

When Talhah woke up the next morning, he went to the first house to find an old, blind and disabled woman. He said to her, "Why does this man come to you?"

She replied, "He has promised to come to me since such-and-such a day. He comes to me to fulfil my needs and alleviate my suffering."

Talhah then left and said to himself, "May your mother lose you, O Talhah! Are you checking up on someone like 'Umar?"

One day, 'Umar – may Allah be pleased with him – was heading for the outskirts of Madinah when he came across an old wayfarer resting in the middle of a path. He had erected his old tent and was sitting next to its entrance in a state of confusion.

'Umar asked him, "Who are you?"

He replied, "I am a Bedouin. I have come to Amir al-Mu'minin

to be a recipient of his favours." Meanwhile, 'Umar heard a woman groan from inside the tent and asked the man about her.

He said, "Don't worry. Just go and fulfil your need."

'Umar replied, "This is, in fact, my need."

The man said, "My wife is about to give birth and I do not have any wealth or food. Nor do I have anyone to help me."

'Umar quickly returned to his home and said to his wife, Umm Kulthum, the daughter of 'Ali bin Abi Talib – may Allah be pleased with them all, "Do you have anything at home that Allah has blessed you with?"

She enquired, "Why do you ask?"

He told her about the man. 'Umar's wife then carried with her some things, while 'Umar carried a sack of food, a plate and firewood, and went to the man. 'Umar's wife then visited the man's wife, while 'Umar sat with the man. 'Umar prepared the fire and blew on the flames while he was cooking the food; the smoke covered his beard while the man sat and watched.

Meanwhile, 'Umar's wife called out from inside the tent and said, "O Amir al-Mu'minin! Glad tidings of a baby boy!"

When the man heard the words, "Amir al-Mu'minin" he became shocked and said, "Are you the Caliph, 'Umar bin al-Khattab?"

"Yes, I am", replied 'Umar.

The man was bemused and began to distance himself from 'Umar.

'Umar said, "Stay in your place."

He then got hold of the plate, placed it next to the tent and called out to his wife, Umm Kulthum saying, "Take some food for her." The woman then ate some food and left the rest outside the tent. 'Umar then took the plate and placed it in front of the man and said, "Have something to eat, for you haven't slept since last night."

'Umar then called his wife out of the tent and said to the man, "Do come to us tomorrow and we will give you whatever you wish."

May Allah have mercy on 'Umar for his humbleness and secret acts of worship which he did for the sole objective of earning Allah's love.

'Ali bin al-Husayn – may Allah have mercy upon him and his father – would carry a sack of bread on his back at night and give it in charity. He would say, "Giving charity in secret extinguishes Allah's wrath." When he died, black marks were found on his back, and it was said, "This is the back of a person who carries loads, but as far as we are aware, he never worked as someone who did that."

When the food supply stopped reaching a hundred homes in Madinah - and these were the homes of widows and orphans who would receive their food supply at night while not knowing who delivered it to them – people realised that it was 'Ali bin al-Husayn who would bring these food supplies and spend on these people.

One of the Salaf fasted for twenty years, fasting a day and not fasting the next, whilst his family had absolutely no knowledge of it. He would have a shop that he would go to at sunrise taking

with him his breakfast and lunch. If it was the day he was fasting, he would give his food in charity. If it was the day he was not fasting, he would eat the food. After sunset, he would return to his family and have dinner with them.

Yes! They would endeavour to make their acts of worship solely for Allah. They are the ones who are truly pious and about whom Allah says, "Indeed! For the duteous is achievement - Gardens enclosed and vineyards, and full-breasted maidens of companions; And a full cup. There hear they never vain discourse, nor lying – Requital from thy Lord – a gift in payment."

Seek the love of the Creator, and He will place in the hearts of the creation the love for you.

Enlightenment...

The objective is not to make people love you superficially, but they should really love you in their hearts.

(66)

Take them out of the ditch

Has it ever happened to you that a person humiliated you publicly by insulting or ridiculing you about anything, even if it be about something as minor as your clothes, your words or your manners, such that your face changed colour as your discomfort became visible? But then, suddenly, another person came to your defence and you felt greatly indebted to him for helping you? Perhaps it was as if he had grabbed hold of your clothes to rescue you just as someone else tried to push you into a ditch. Practise this skill with others and you will see it having wondrous effects.

You visit a person and notice his son coming with a plate of food, and while in the process of doing so, he hurries and nearly drops it. His father becomes angry at him and screams, "Why the hurry? How many times must I tell you not to hurry?" You notice that the son's face turns red with embarrassment.

You say, "No. Don't say that. He's the man! MashaAllah, look at him, he is carrying all of this by himself. Maybe he hurried because he needs to tend to something else, too."

How indebted would the son feel towards you? And if this is the case with the young, then how about with those who are

older? What if you were to praise a colleague in a gathering after others had bitterly and mercilessly condemning him, or praise a brother after your family members unanimously turned against him?

A young man was made to feel embarrassed when a person asked him publicly, "Give us the good news, dear so-and-so! What marks did you get at university?"

Tell me in the name of Allah, does any intelligent person ask such a question in public? The man's face turned red, so I gently saved him by saying, "Dear so-and-so, why are you so interested in his results? Are you going to marry him off to someone? Or do you have a job to offer him?" Upon hearing this, everyone laughed and the question was forgotten.

If a person criticised another for a low average, you should say to him, "Dear brother, do not criticise him. The topic he is specialising in is difficult. InshaaAllah his grade average will be better next time."

Intelligent people are always hunting for opportunities to earn people's love.

Once 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud – may Allah be pleased with him – was walking with the Prophet ﷺ, and as they walked by a tree, the Prophet ﷺ asked him to climb the tree and break off a twig to clean his teeth with. Ibn Mas'ud climbed up the tree, since he was very slim and small, and began to break off a twig. Meanwhile, the wind blew, blowing his garment and exposing his shins that were very thin and bony. When people saw this, they laughed.

At that point, the Prophet ﷺ said, "What are you laughing at,

the thinness of his shins? By Allah, they are heavier than Mount Uhud in the Scales!" (Ahmad, Abu Ya'la - Sahih)

How good must 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud have felt when the Prophet ﷺ defended and praised him after the people had laughed at him?

Point of view…

Intelligent people are always hunting for opportunities to earn people's love.

(67)

Looking after one's appearance

Once, Abu Hanifah was sitting amongst his students in the mosque, giving them a class. He had a pain in his knee, due to which he had stretched out his leg and was leaning against a wall. Meanwhile, a man with a majestic appearance came to him wearing a nice garment and a fine turban. He walked in a very dignified manner. When the students saw him, they made way for him so that he could sit next to Abu Hanifah.

When Abu Hanifah saw his appearance and sedateness, he became embarrassed of the way in which he was sitting, so he bent his leg and endured the pain in his knee. Abu Hanifah continued to deliver his lecture as the man listened. When the lesson finished, the students began to ask questions. The man raised his hand to ask a question, so Abu Hanifah turned to him and said, "What is your question?"

He said, "O Shaykh! When does the time for the Maghrib prayer enter?"

Abu Hanifah replied, "When the sun sets!"

He said, "What if the night falls and the sun still hasn't set? What should we do then?"

Abu Hanifah then said, "'It's time for Abu Hanifah to spread

his leg…" and spread his leg he did!

He refused to answer such an absurd question, for how could the night fall when the sun has not set?

They say that the first look makes up for 70% of a person's impression of you. To me, it seems upon contemplation that the first look makes up for 95% of the impression, until you speak or introduce yourself. Then this percentage either increases or decreases.

If you walk through a passageway in a hospital or a company and next to you there is a man wearing nice clothes who is walking sedately, you will notice that you – perhaps subconsciously – would turn to him upon reaching a door and say, "Please, you first!"

In contrast, if you were to enter a car of one of your friends and saw that its interior was in complete chaos with a shoe lying here, takeaway bags there, a tissue here, and audio cassettes there, you would have the immediate impression about the person that he was chaotic and uncaring about arranging things. The same applies to the way people dress and how they generally appear. What I mean here is to be concerned with one's appearance and not extravagance in clothing, cars, furniture, etc.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would give much consideration to these aspects. He would wear a beautiful robe which he would only wear on the two 'Eids and Fridays. He used to have a special robe he would wear when receiving envoys. He would give great consideration to his appearance and smell, and would love perfume.

Anas – may Allah be pleased with him – said, "He had the

brightest skin colour. His sweat was pearl-like. When he walked, he leant forward slightly. I have never touched a piece of silk as soft as the hand of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. I have never smelt a perfume or an ambergris better than the smell of the Prophet ﷺ. His hand was perfumed as though he had just withdrawn it from the place where a perfume maker keeps his tools. He was recognised merely by his scent whenever he came."

Anas – may Allah be pleased with him – also said, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would never refuse perfume. He had the most beautiful face. His face was as bright as the sun. Whenever he became happy, his face brightened, as if it were a piece of moon."

Jabir bin Samurah said, "I once saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ on a night illuminated by a full moon. I compared the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to the moon whilst he was wearing a red robe. To me, he seemed more beautiful than the moon."

The Prophet ﷺ would encourage the Muslims to look after their appearance.

Abul-Haws narrates from his father that he said, "I came to the Prophet ﷺ wearing a rough garment.

He said, 'Do you have any wealth?'

'Yes', I said.

He said, 'What do you have?'

I said, 'Camels, cows, cattle, horses and slaves.'

He said, 'If Allah gives you wealth, then let the affects of Allah's bounty and honour upon you be shown in your appearance.'"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever Allah blesses with a bounty,

Allah likes to see the affects of that bounty appear on His servant."

Jabir bin 'Abdullah – may Allah be pleased with him – said, "Once the Messenger of Allah ﷺ came to our house for a visit and saw a man with dishevelled hair. He said: 'Couldn't he find anything to comb his hair with?'"

On another occasion he saw a man wearing dirty clothes, and said, "Couldn't he find water to wash his clothes with?"

He ﷺ also said, "Whoever has hair should honour it."

He used to encourage people to demonstrate good behaviour and have a beautiful appearance, nice clothes and a fine smell. He often used to say, "Allah is beautiful and loves beauty." (Muslim)

Experience…

The first look makes up for 70% of the impression people get of you.

(68)

Honesty

I was once invigilating in an examination room on a Thursday. Although Thursday is not a weekday in Saudi Arabia, we were forced to have an exam on that day due to the large number of subjects we had.

A few minutes after the beginning of the exam, a student came in late. The poor lad was looking bewildered.

I said to him, "Sorry, you have come late and I cannot let you into the examination room." He began to beg me to allow him in.

I asked him, "Why are you late?"

He said, "By Allah, dear teacher, I overslept!"

I was impressed at his honesty and said, "OK. You may come in." He entered and sat his exam.

A few minutes later another student came late. I said to him, "Why are you late?"

He said, "By Allah, dear teacher, there is so much traffic on the road! As you know, everyone leaves for work in the morning – some are going to the university, others are heading for work, etc."

He then began mentioning all the different people on road to assure me that there really was heavy traffic on the road, but the wretched lad forgot that it was a Thursday and that it was therefore a weekend. Perhaps there was nobody at all on the road that day except students from our university!

I said to him, "So there was a traffic jam and the road was packed with cars?"

He said, "Yes, by Allah, dear teacher! If you were with me you would know what I mean!"

I said to him, "You sly person! If you want to lie, then at least plan it properly! Dear brother, today is a Thursday!" Meaning, a weekend - no one goes to work on a Thursday! What traffic are you talking about?

He said, "Oh! Sorry, dear teacher! I forgot to say that my tyre was punctured." Meaning, one of his tyres was punctured so he got delayed while fixing the tyre. The poor lad was thrown, so I just laughed and let him into the examination room.

Yes! How horrible it is for people to find out that you are lying to them!

Lies repel people from you and affect your friendships. It makes people feel that you can never again be trusted. If someone you have lied to falls into a problem, he would never complain to you, and even if you advise him, he would never listen to you. How ugly it is to lie!

The Prophet ﷺ said, "A believer might commit every sin - except betrayal and lying." (Ahmad and Abu Ya'la with narrators of al-Bukhari)

The Prophet ﷺ was asked, "Can a believer be a coward?"

He replied, "Yes"

He was then asked, "Can a believer be miserly?"

"Yes", he replied.

He was then asked, "Can a believer be a liar?"

"No!" he replied. (al-Muwatta, Mursal)

'Abdullah bin 'Amir – may Allah be pleased with him – said: "My mother once called me while the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was sitting in our house.

She said, 'Come here and I will give you something.'

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to her, 'What do you want to give him?'

She said, 'I will give him some dates.'

He said to her, 'If you were to fail to give anything to him, one act of lying would have been recorded against you.'" (Abu Dawud, Hasan)

If the Prophet ﷺ ever found out that someone in his household had lied, he would remain aloof from them forever. Many a time, people are pushed to lie in order to paint a more beautiful picture of themselves. Thus, you would find them lying about their courage, or inventing their own chronicles, or adding to the truth to make it more interesting, or claiming to be talented when they are not. You will find the liar making promises and breaking them. When he makes blunders, he will make up excuses, only for his lies to be discovered by others sooner rather than later.

Once, al-Imam az-Zuhri stood in front of the ruler of his time and gave his testimony over an issue.

The ruler said, "You have lied!"

Az-Zuhri screamed, "I seek refuge in Allah! Would I lie? By Allah, if someone were to call from the heavens that Allah has made lying permissible, then I still would not lie! How can I then lie when it is haram?"

Reality

They deceived you when they said that it was only a white lie, because a lie is always black in colour.

(69)

Bravery

Someone said to me once after we had just left a wedding party, "Believe me, I know the name of the Companion whose story you mentioned and whose name you did not remember."

I said, "Amazing! Why didn't you mention his name, then? You surely saw me confused and trying hard to remember his name!"

He hung his head down and said, "I was too shy to speak."

I said to myself, "How dreadful is cowardice!"

Another person I know used to teach the final-year students at a secondary school with me. I met him one day and he said to me, "A couple of days ago I entered the classroom and noticed the students sitting silently, while the teacher was simply sitting on his chair instead of teaching.

I sat down and asked the one next to me: 'What's wrong?'

He replied: 'Our classmate 'Asaf passed away yesterday. May Allah have mercy on him.'

There were a number of 'Asaf's friends in the class who didn't pray and were engaged in many prohibited actions. They were all clearly affected by what they had heard. I thought to

myself that perhaps I should say a few words in admonition and encourage them to pray, be dutiful to their parents and improve themselves."

I said, "Excellent! Did you do it then?"

He said, "Well, I didn't, as I felt too shy to."

I remained silent, suppressed my annoyance and said to myself, "How dreadful is cowardice!"

You ask a woman, "Why don't you be frank with your husband about the subject?"

She replies, "I am shy! I fear he might become upset with me or not speak to me! I am fearful…"

How dreadful is cowardice!

You ask a young man, "Why didn't you tell your father about the problem before it became worse?"

He said, "I was scared… I didn't have the guts…"

Some of them may even raise your blood-pressure by saying, "I am too shy to smile… I am too embarrassed to praise him… I fear people might say: 'He is too courteous and light-hearted.'"

I hear about such behaviour too often - such that I wish I could scream, "O cowards! For how long will you remain so?"

A coward can never attain glory. He is always negative. If he attends a gathering, he wears the cloak of cowardice and never participates in a discussion. If a joke is mentioned, people laugh and make comments, but he simply hangs his head down and smiles. When he attends a gathering, no one even feels his presence. It makes it even worse for him to be a father, a husband, or

a director, or even a wife or a mother and be a coward.

People universally dislike cowardice. It is never respected. So train yourself to be brave when giving a lecture or advice, as well as of course exercising the skills required to deal with people.

A point of view

Train yourself, for one hour's patience leads to victory.

(70)

Steadiness on principles

The stronger a person's personality is, and the firmer he remains on his principles and the more important he becomes.

Your principles may include that you do not take a bribe, no matter how beautifully it is referred to it: a tip, a gift, a commission, and so on. Remain firm on your principles.

A wife may have the principle of never lying to her husband, regardless of how beautified it may be made for her in order to get along with him by using white lies. Let her remain firm on her principles.

Such principles include not maintaining unlawful relationships with the opposite gender and not drinking alcohol. If a person does not smoke and one day sits with his friends who are smokers, then let him remain firm on his principles.

A person who sticks to his principles is seen as a hero, even if his friends pass judgement on him and accuse him of being difficult. You will find that many of these friends would certainly turn to him while facing great difficulties, or for advice concerning private matters. They would consider him to be a more important person than the others.

This is not applicable for one gender in exclusion to the oth-

er. Rather, it applies equally to men and women. Be firm in your principles and do not waiver, or else people will subdue you.

When Islam became dominant and tribes began sending envoys to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, an envoy from the Thaqif tribe came with ten-odd men. When they arrived, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ brought them to the mosque so they may hear the Qur'an.

They asked him about usury, fornication and alcohol, so he informed that they were forbidden. They also had an idol which they would honour and worship following their forefathers which was named ar-Rabbah (i.e. goddess) and they used to describe it as at-Taghiyah (the tyrant). They had concocted various stories and tales about it to convince people of its strength. They asked the Prophet ﷺ about ar-Rabbah, as to what he would like to be done to it. He replied without hesitation, "Destroyed …"

They were terrified and said, "Impossible! If she knew that you wanted to destroy it, she would annihilate everyone!"

'Umar, who was present in the gathering, was amazed at their fear of the idol being destroyed. He said, "Woe be to you, O Thaqif! How ignorant you are! Ar-Rabbah is just a stone that neither can benefit nor harm!"

They became angry and said, "We have not come to speak to you, O Ibn al-Khattab!" 'Umar became silent.

They then said, "We want to stipulate a condition that you leave at-Taghiya alone for three years, after which you may destroy it if you wish."

The Prophet ﷺ realised that they were attempting to ne-

gotiate on an issue of creed, which is the greatest principle in a Muslim's life, since the oneness of Allah is the very foundation of Islam!

However, if they really were about to become Muslims, then why the need to remain attached to this idol?

The Prophet ﷺ replied, "No."

They said, "OK, then leave it for two years, and then you can destroy it."

"No," he s replied.

They said, "OK, then leave it for a year only!"

"No", he replied.

When they realised that he would not respond to their wishes, they also realised that the issue was that of polytheism and faith, and therefore not open to bargaining!

They said, "O Messenger of Allah, you be the one to destroy it. We can never destroy it ourselves."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "I will send someone to you who will spare you from having to destroy it."

They said, "As for the prayer, then we do not want to pray, since we have a disdain for a man's bottom being higher than his head!"

The Prophet ﷺ replied, "As for destroying your idols by your own hands, then we have absolved you from that, but as for the prayer, then there is no good in a religion that has no prayer!"

They replied, "We will do so, even if we scorn it," and made an agreement with the Prophet ﷺ.

They went back to their people and called them to Islam, and the people became Muslims, albeit reluctantly.

There then came to them some men from the companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in order to destroy the idol. The men included Khalid bin al-Walid and al-Mughirah bin Shu'bah al-Thaqafi.

As the Companions headed for the idol, the people of Thaqif became terrified. Their men, women and children came out to observe the idol. They had a feeling in their hearts that the idol would not be destroyed and that it would somehow defend itself.

Al-Mughirah bin Shu'bah stood up, took an axe and turned to the Companions who were with him and said, "By Allah, I will make you laugh over Thaqif!"

Al-Mughira bin Shu'bah then approached the idol, struck it with the axe, fell on the ground and began to shake his leg. Upon seeing this, the people of Thaqif screamed with joy, "May Allah distance al-Mughirah from His mercy! Ar-Rabbah has killed him!" They then turned to the rest of the Companions and said, "Whoever of you wants to break the idol, let him step forward!"

Thereupon, al-Mughirah stood up laughing and said, "Woe to you, O people of Thaqif! I was only joking! This idol is only made of stone! Turn to Allah in repentance and worship Him alone!"

He then turned to the idol to destroy it whilst the people were still there, looking on. He finally destroyed the idol, stone by stone, until it was levelled it to the ground.

Revelation…

"Whoever seeks people's pleasure at the displeasure of Allah, Allah becomes displeased with him, as do the people. And whoever seeks the pleasure of Allah for the displeasure of people, Allah becomes pleased with him, as do the people"

(71)

Temptations

I read about a young Muslim in Britain who came across an advertisement by a company looking for escorts. He went to the interview to find a group of young men comprised of Muslims and non-Muslims. The interviewees were entering into the interview room one after the other, and every time a person would come out, those waiting outside would ask, "What did they ask you? What did you say?"

One of the important questions they asked the interviewees was, "How much alcohol do you drink a day?" When the young man's turn came, he entered and began to answer their questions. During the session, they asked the same question.

The young man thought to himself that perhaps he should lie and say that he drinks alcohol like the rest of the young men, just so that they would not think that he was a strict Muslim. He also contemplated speaking the truth and saying, "I am a Muslim and Allah has forbidden me from drinking alcohol. Therefore, I do not drink."

After some quick thinking, he decided to speak the truth. Thus, he said, "I do not drink."

They said, "Why? Are you ill?"

He said, "No, but rather because I am a Muslim and alcohol is forbidden for me."

They said, "Meaning, you don't drink? Even on the weekends?"

He said, "Yes. I do not drink at all."

They looked at each other in surprise. When the results were published, his name was top of the list! He began to work with them and several months passed. One day, he spoke to one of the interviewers and asked him, "Why did you ask questions about alcohol consumption?"

He said, "Because the job is to do with escorting, and every time we have employed a young man, we would be surprised to discover that he drank and got drunk. When we realised that you do not drink, we knew that we got the person we were looking for, and hence we employed you!"

How wonderful it is to stick to your principles, despite temptations!

The problem is that we live in a society where it is difficult to find those who stick to their principles – people who live and die for them, those who rigidly adhere to them in the face of temptations.

If you follow the right method and adhere to the straight path, then those who believe in different principles will never leave you alone. Whenever you refuse a bribe, the friends who are attempting to bribe you are angered. Whenever you refuse to indulge in illicit sexual relations, those who do indulge in them will become upset with you.

It is related that 'Umar bin al-Khattab – may Allah be pleased with him – was once on a night patrol. He passed by a house in the darkest part of the night and heard the people therein laughing and fooling around as if they were drunk. He did not wish to knock at their door at night and feared he might have wrongly assumed that they were drunk. He therefore wished to ascertain the matter.

He therefore took a piece of coal, made a mark on the door, and left. The owner of the house heard something at the door, so he went out and noticed the mark. He looked up to see the back of 'Umar and understood what had happened.

What he should have done was to wipe out the mark and that would have been the end of the matter. But he didn't do that. Instead, he took the piece of coal and went to his neighbours' houses, leaving marks on their doors! It was as if he wanted the people to be as base as him by being drunk like him, instead of wanting to raise himself to their level!

There is an idiom which says, "A fornicating woman wishes that all women fornicated like her."

Sometimes you may find that a wife habitually lies to her husband. She has been cultured to be a habitual liar from a very young age. When she comes across someone who criticises her for that and advises her to speak the truth, she will try to drag her to her side of the fence. She would insist, "This is all you can do with men! You cannot live with them except by lying to them." Some women listening to this may begin to give up their principles and change while others may remain firm on their principles.

The same can be said about a manager who treats his employees nicely because he believes that this attitude benefits the work, makes everyone feel at ease with each other, and increases productivity. Yet, another manager may come along who is always angry with his employees, so perhaps he would envy the first manager and therefore attempt to convince him to deal with them differently. He may say to him, "Don't do that… Do this… Don't smile…"

A grocer, for example, may not sell cigarettes, but then his friend comes to him and advises him to sell cigarettes to increase his profits and puts doubts in his mind to convince him of his opinion. Be brave and stick to your principles. Say in a loud voice, "Never! No matter what the temptations!"

In the past, some disbelievers tried to make the Messenger of Allah ﷺ give up some of his principles, and hence, Allah said, "They wish that you compromise, so they too can compromise."

Meaning, that the disbelievers who worship idols have no principles to adhere to, and hence, they see no difficulty in giving anything up. So be wary of them ever tempting you to lose grip of your principles.

Methodology

Allah says, "Do not obey those who reject the truth. They wish that you compromise, so they too can compromise."

(72)

Forgiving others

Life is full of pains that we suffer due to others. One makes an embarrassing joke, another throws an insult, and so on. Many people intrude into others' private matters, others argue in public gatherings, others have different viewpoints and opinions, and so on.

Some of us exaggerate matters in the mind and are unwilling to forgive and forget. Some of us are too proud to accept people's excuses and forgive them. Some people punish themselves by not forgiving others. Their hearts are often filled with envy that keeps their thoughts busy and constantly torments them. How fair is envy! It begins with the one who harbours it and ends up killing him.

Therefore, do not torment yourself. There are certain things in the world that you simply cannot punish anyone over. Have a big heart, forget the past and continue to live your life as normal.

When the Prophet ﷺ entered Makkah as a conqueror and the people felt secure, he came to the Ka'bah and made Tawaf on his camel. When he finished the Tawaf, he called 'Uthman bin Talhah and took from him the keys to the Ka'bah. The Ka'bah

was then opened up to him and he entered. When he entered, he saw the images of angels and other beings from Quraysh's imagination, based on their ignorance. When he saw the image of Ibrahim with arrows, as if he was raffling with them, he said, "May Allah curse them! They depicted our Shaykh raffling with arrows to divide the food! What has Ibrahim got to do with these arrows?'" (Refer to Quran 5:3)

"Ibrahim was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a monotheist Muslim, and was not from the polytheists."

He thus ordered that all such images be effaced. He then found a pigeon made of wood, broke it with his hands and threw it away. He then stood at the door of the Ka'bah while the people had gathered around in the mosque from the Muslims and the disbelievers to watch him. He prayed two units of prayer and made his way to Zamzam. He looked into the well and asked for some water to be fetched, which he drank from and made wudhu with, as the people hastily began to seek blessings from the remaining water. The pagans were left amazed. They said, "We have never seen or heard of a king being treated with this much respect."

He then approached Maqam Ibrahim and moved it away from the Ka'bah as it was previously attached to it. He then stood at the door of the Ka'bah and began to look at the crowds – how much I wish I was with them! – and then gave a sermon:

"There is no one worthy of worship but Allah! The one who has no partners! He has been true to His servant and aided him, and single-handedly destroyed all the armies! Indeed, every retribution for life, murder, or usury is under my feet, except the

caretaking of the Ka'bah and providing water to the pilgrims."

He then laid down some of the rules of Shari'ah, saying, "For the one who is killed in the act of manslaughter with a whip or a stick, the blood-money for his life is a hundred camels, forty of them pregnant." He carried on with his sermon and looked at the leaders of the Quraysh and said, "O Quraysh! Allah has ridden you of pre-Islamic pride, and the pride in your forefathers. Men are descendants of Adam and Adam is made from dust!"

He then recited, "O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Indeed, the most honourable of you with Allah is the most God-fearing of you. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All- Aware."

He then began to focus on the faces of the disbelievers, as he was at the pinnacle of strength and dominion standing by the door of the Ka'bah, while the disbelievers were in the depths of disgrace and weakness. This was the place where they had rejected and humiliated him. This was the place where they had dropped filth over his head whilst he prostrated. Today, the disbelievers of the Quraysh were standing in front of him, defeated, disgraced and humiliated.

He said, "O Quraysh! What do you think I will do to you now?"

They rose up and said, "You will be good to us. You are an honourable brother to us, and the son of an honourable brother."

Amazing! Had they forgotten what they used to do to this honourable brother? Had they forgotten about their insults:

'Crazy, magician, soothsayer?' If he really was an honourable brother and the son of an honourable brother, then why did they wage war against him? What about the torture they had inflicted upon the weak and poor Muslims?

Bilal was standing there. Right in front of them! The marks on his body were still vivid! There was the tree where Sumayyah was murdered along with Yasir! Here was their son, 'Ammar ,with the Muslims!

Yet, today they were saying, "Honourable brother"?

What about their boycott of the Prophet along with weak Muslims for three years in the valley of Bani 'Amir, until they were compelled to eat the leaves of trees due to severe hunger? They had not felt feel any pity for a crying child, nor a groaning old man, nor a pregnant or breastfeeding woman!

What about their wars against him at Badr and Uhud? What about their alliances against him at Khadaq? Yet, today, he was their honourable brother?

What about them preventing him from Makkah to perform 'Umrah when he had come to them just a few years ago to do so? They had left him in al-Hudaybiyah and prevented him from entering Makkah!

What about them preventing his uncle Abu Talib from embracing Islam when he was on his deathbed?

There was probably a very long list of painful memories going through his mind as he looked at the faces of the disbelievers from Quraysh, as his sight fell on the roads of Makkah, and as he gazed upon the mountains surrounding the Haram. He was not

alone, for the same memories were probably also going through the minds of Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, Ali and Bilal. Each of them had gone through a terrible ordeal at the hands of Quraysh. The Prophet ﷺ was able to punish them with the most severe forms of punishments as they were enemy combatants, transgressors and violators of treaties. They had violated the treaty of Hudaybiyah and transgressed. They were criminals in shock, not knowing what would happen to them.

However, the Prophet ﷺ crushed all grudges, rose with his noble determination, and said the words that would be remembered throughout history: "Go, for you are free!"

They left in joy, as if their feet were about to fly in the air due to their delight. They wondered, "Did he really pardon us?"

He then turned to look around the Ka'bah and noticed three hundred and sixty idols that were worshiped besides Allah, right next to Allah's house! The Prophet ﷺ began to strike them with his hand and make them collapse as he said, "The truth has arrived and falsehood has vanished! The truth has arrived! Falsehood neither creates anything new, nor restores anything."

A number of rebellious disbelievers from Quraysh, those who had a history of confronting the Muslims, ran away from Makkah before the Prophet ﷺ and his companions arrived. Amongst them was Safwan bin Umayyah who fled Makkah. He was confused as to where he should head to, so he decided to go to Jeddah to board a ship and sail to Yemen.

When the people noticed the generous pardoning on part of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and the fact that he decided to overlook the painful past, there came to him 'Umayr bin Wahb, who

said, "O Prophet of Allah, Safwan bin Umayyah is the leader of his people. He has fled Makkah in fear of you and thrown himself into the sea. Please, grant him security! May Allah's blessings be on you!"

The Prophet ﷺ quite comfortably said, "He is granted security."

'Umayr said, "O Messenger of Allah, please give me a sign with which he will know that you have granted him security."

The Prophet ﷺ gave him his turban which he wore upon entering Makkah, so that when Safwan saw it, he would trust 'Umayr's words.

'Umayr took the turban and caught up with Safwan as he was trying to board the ship.

He said, "O Safwan! May my father and mother be sacrificed for you! For Allah's sake, don't kill yourself! I have come to you with an assurance of security from the Messenger of Allah!"

Safwan said, "Woe be to you! Disappear from my sight and don't speak to me! You are a liar!" He was afraid of the consequences of the evil actions he had perpetrated against the Muslims.

'Umayr shouted, "O Safwan! May my father and mother be sacrificed for you! The Messenger of Allah is the best of people! He is the most righteous of people! He is the most persevering of people! He is the most excellent of people! He is your cousin. His dignity is your dignity. His honour is your honour. His kingdom is your kingdom!"

Safwan said, "I fear for my life."

'Umayr replied, "He is too persevering and honouring to exact revenge!"

Safwan therefore returned with him and they reached Makkah. 'Umayr took him to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Safwan said, "He claims that you have granted me security."

The Prophet ﷺ replied, "He has spoken the truth."

Safwan said, "As for accepting Islam, then please give me two months to think about it," i.e. I will remain in Makkah on my religion of worshipping idols for two months and contemplate whether or not I should accept Islam.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "You can think for four months."

Safwan later embraced Islam – may Allah be pleased with him.

How beautiful it is to forgive others and forget the painful past! Without any doubt, only great people can have this characteristic - those who rise with their noble principles above the lowliness of revenge and retribution, grudge and rage. Life is very short. It is surely too short for us to soil it with grudge and malice.

Even with regards to personal matters, the Prophet ﷺ was very easy going. Al-Miqdad bin al-Aswad said, "My friends and I arrived in Madinah and met people, but nobody accepted us as guests. We thus came to the Prophet ﷺ and mentioned to him what had happened. He hosted us in his house where he had four goats and said: 'Milk them, O Miqdad. Divide them up in four portions and have one each.'

This is what I would do each day."

Every evening, al-Miqdad would milk the goats, drink from them, along with his friends, and leave a portion for the Prophet ﷺ. If the Prophet ﷺ was present he would drink it there and then, and if he was absent, they would preserve it for him until he ﷺ returned.

One evening, al-Miqdad milked the goats as usual and portioned it into four, drunk it along with his friends and left a portion for the Prophet ﷺ to drink when he returned. The Prophet ﷺ, however, got delayed. Al-Miqdad laid down in his bed and thought to himself, "Perhaps, the Prophet ﷺ went to some Ansari's house where they gave him dinner. Maybe I can drink his portion of milk!" His soul kept whispering to him until he eventually got up and drunk it, not leaving anything for the Prophet ﷺ!

Al-Miqdad said, "When the milk entered my stomach, I was very much taken by what had happened and felt remorse. I thought to myself that perhaps the Prophet ﷺ would arrive at any time, hungry and thirsty, only to find his utensil empty, and thereupon he may even pray against me! I covered my face with my blanket.", (due to sorrow).

After a while, the Prophet ﷺ came and greeted people loud enough for those who were awake to hear without disturbing those who were asleep. Al-Miqdad was still lying in his bed looking at the Prophet ﷺ.

The Prophet ﷺ turned to his utensil to find it empty. He raised his gaze to the sky, and as he did that, al-Miqdad became terrified and thought, "Now he is going to pray against me!" But he was to be surprised at what he heard. He heard the Prophet ﷺ pray, "O Allah! Quench the thirst of whoever quenches mine,

and feed whoever feeds me."

When al-Miqdad heard this, he thought to himself, "Take benefit of the Prophet'ﷺ prayer!" He got up, took a knife and approached the goats to pick one, slaughter it, and feed it to the Prophet ﷺ. He began to feel the goats to see which of them was the meatiest and most fitting to be slaughtered. Meanwhile, his hands fell on the udders of one of the goats, and it was full of milk. He looked at the other goat and it too was full of milk! He then noticed that they all had milk. He milked them all in a large utensil until it became full to the brim. He then took it to the Prophet ﷺ and said, "Drink, O Messenger of Allah!"

When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saw the amount of milk, he said, "Did you not drink your portions, O Miqdad?"

He replied, "Just drink, O Messenger of Allah…"

He said, "What happened?"

Al-Miqdad replied, "Drink first, and then I will tell you what happened…"

The Prophet ﷺ drank some and then handed over the utensil to al-Miqdad.

Al-Miqdad said, "Drink, O Messenger of Allah…"

He drank and gave it to al-Miqdad, but he said again, "Drink, O Messenger of Allah!"

Al-Miqdad then completed the story and said, "When I realised that the Prophet's thirst had been quenched, and that I was therefore worthy of being blessed by his prayer: 'O Allah! Quench the thirst of whoever quenches mine, and feed whoever feeds me', I laughed so much that I fell on the floor!"

Upon seeing this, the Prophet ﷺ said, "What did you do wrong?"

He said, "O Messenger of Allah, you returned late today, and I was still hungry. I thought to myself that perhaps the Messenger of Allah had something to eat whilst visiting some Ansar…" He related to him the full story, including the fact that the goats were milked twice in one evening very unusually.

Even the Prophet ﷺ became amazed as to how can the goats' udders became full so quickly, for it is impossible for a goat to be milked twice in an evening!

The Prophet ﷺ said, "This was only due to Allah's mercy. If you were to have informed me of this before I finished the milk, perhaps you could have awoken your two friends to share in this, too."

Al-Miqdad said, "I swear by the one who has sent you with the truth, so long as you are a recipient of Allah's mercy and I have a share in that, I don't care whoever receives Allah's mercy after us!"

Point of view…

Life is all about give and take, so give more than you take.

(73)

Generosity

The Prophet ﷺ once asked a people, "Who is your leader?"

They said, "Our leader is so and on, although we consider him to be stingy!"

He said, "What disease is worse than stinginess? Rather, your leader is so-and-so with the white complexion and curly hair!"

This was part of a conversation that took place between a tribe and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. When they embraced Islam, the Prophet ﷺ asked them who their leader was so he could choose him or someone else as their leader after they had embraced Islam.

Yes, what disease is as bad as stinginess?

How ugly the trait of stinginess is, and how averse to it people are! How wretched the stingy are! One of them would never think of organising a dinner party in his house for his friends, in order to draw closer to them. He would hardly give gifts. He would not look after his appearance and would never pay attention to how he smells, in order to save money.

As for the generous one, then he generously spends on his friends. He is always close to those he loves. If they want to meet up, they know to meet in his house. If one of them is lacking in

anything, he is the first one to offer help, thereby capturing their hearts by his generosity. He enslaves their hearts with his kindness.

It is important to remember when you show generosity to anyone that your intention be good. Your intention should be to improve brotherhood amongst the Muslims and earn their love, as well as of course getting closer to Allah by showing them kindness. One should not be generous for fame, leadership, or to hear praises.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "The Fire of Hell will first be ablaze by three people," and of the three he mentioned a person who used to spend generously so that it was said that he was generous. He was not generous to seek Allah's pleasure, but only that of the creation - in order to show off and for fame.

Here is the hadeeth in full:

Sufyan said, "I entered Madinah and saw a man with a crowd of people around him.

I enquired, 'Who is this man?'

They said, 'Abu Hurayrah.'

I came close to him and sat down in front of him as he spoke to the people. When he became silent and the people left, I said, 'I ask you by Allah, tell me of a hadeeth you heard from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and learnt.'

Abu Hurayrah replied, 'I will. I will narrate to you a hadeeth I heard from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, which I have understood and learnt.'

Abu Hurayrah took a took a deep gasp, such that he fainted

and remained so for a while, then he regained consciousness and said, 'I will surely narrate to you what the Messenger of Allah ﷺ told me. The two of us were in this house and there was none other than us present.' He then took another deep gasp, such that he fainted and remained so for a while, then he regained conscionsness and wiped his face.

He then said, 'I will surely narrate to you a hadeeth I heard from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The two of us were in this house and there was none other than us present.' Abu Hurayrah then took another deep gasp and fell forward onto his face, and I pleaded with him for a long time, then he regained consciousness and said, 'The Messenger of Allah ﷺ told me that on the Day of Resurrection, Allah will descend to judge between His servants, and you will see each nation humbled on its knees.

The first people He will call are:

i) A man who had memorised the Qur'an

ii) A man who had been killed in Allah's path

iii) A rich man

Allah will say to the recitor of the Qur'an: 'Did I not teach you what I revealed to my messengers?'

He will say, 'You certainly did!'

Allah will ask, 'So what did you do with your knowledge?'

He will say, 'I would be reciting morning and evening.'

Allah will say, 'You have lied!'

The angels will also say, 'You have lied!'

Allah will then say, 'You wanted the people to say that so-and-

so is a recitor, and this is what was said.' (Meaning, you achieved your reward in the world since you were showing off with your actions. You wanted people's praise and you achieved it, since the people praised you and said, 'so-and-so is a recitor!')

The rich man will then be brought and Allah will say to him: 'Did I not give you plenty such that you never needed anyone's help?'

He will say, 'You certainly did.'

Allah will ask, 'What did you do with the wealth I gave you?'

He will say, 'I used to spend it on relatives and give in charity.'

Allah will say, 'You have lied!'

The angels will also say, 'You have lied!'

Allah will say, 'You wanted the people to say that so-and-so is very generous! Now that was what was said.'

Then the person who was killed in Allah's path will be brought.

He will be asked, 'Why were you killed?'

He will say, 'You ordered me to make Jihad, and so I fought until I was killed.'

Allah will say, 'You have lied!'

The angels will also say, 'You have lied!'

Allah will say, 'Rather, you wanted the people to say that so-and-so is brave! Now that was what was said.'

Abu Hurayrah said, 'The Prophet ﷺ then placed his hands

on my knees and said, "O Abu Hurayrah! Those three will be the first of Allah's creation to be thrown to the fire as fuel on the Day of Resurrection.'" (al-Tirmidhi and al-Hakim, Sahih)

Hence, once you have purified your intention before being generous, then have good tidings of great fortune!

Those most deserving of being the recipients of your generosity in exchange for their love are your family members, such as your mother, your father, your wife and your children, and so on.

As the Prophet ﷺ said, "Start with yourself, and then whoever you look after." "It is enough of a sin for a person to forsake those who is obliged to spend on."

A distinction must be made between generosity and wastefulness. A man once walked through an old road and passed by a house which seemed as though it was about to crumble. He saw a little girl sitting at the door wearing ragged clothes, looking like a beggar.

He asked her, "Who are you?"

She said, "I am the daughter of Hatim al-Ta'i." Hatim al-Ta'i was a legendary figure, renowned for his generosity par excellence in Arab history.

The man said, "How strange! The daughter of Hatim al-Ta'i – the one renowned for his generosity in this land!"

She replied, "Our father's generosity has led us to this state, as you can see!"

Allah says, "Make not your hand tied (like a miser) to your neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that you be-

come blameworthy and destitute."

So whilst the generous person is praised, the one who is wasteful is criticised. This is why Allah has forbidden us from both clenching our fists tight and opening them up completely, and ordered us instead to be balanced.

The Prophet ﷺ was the most generous of people. He did not have any form of greed and did not cater for his own interests while ignoring that of others.

Abu Hurayrah – may Allah be pleased with him – said, "I swear by Allah – the One besides whom there is no god! I was so hungry once that I was sitting down on the ground with a stone tied around my stomach! For a whole day I sat in the path where people make their way out of the mosque. Abu Bakr passed by me and I asked him about a verse from Allah's book. I did not ask him except in the hope that he would ask me to go with him, but he didn't. Then 'Umar passed by me, and I asked him about a verse in Allah's book only in the hope that he would ask me to go with him, but he didn't."

The Companions at that point were experiencing a severe food shortage. If any of them had a guest, he probably would not have had anything to offer.

Abu Hurayrah continued, "Then Abul-Qasim ﷺ passed by me and smiled as he saw me. He instantly realised by looking at my face what I needed.

He said, 'Abu Hurayrah!'

I said, 'At your service, O Messenger of Allah!'

He said, 'Come along!'

He said that and walked off as I followed him. He entered his house. I asked his permission to enter and he gave me it, so I entered.

He found some milk in a utensil and asked, 'Where did this milk come from?'

His family said: 'So-and-so gave it to you as a gift.'

He said, 'Abu Hurayrah!

I said, 'At your service, O Messenger of Allah!'

He said, 'Go to the people of as-Sufa and ask them to come over.'

Ahl as-Sufa were the 'guests of Islam'. They were a group of people who had accepted Islam, left their cities and decided to live in Madinah in the mosque, not worrying about family or wealth.

The Prophet ﷺ would feel pity for them. Whenever he received anything in charity, he would send it to them directly, without having taken anything from it. Whenever he received something which was sent as a gift to them, he would share it with them.

This bothered me. I thought to myself, 'Why give this milk to Ahl as-Sufa? I am more deserving of drinking this milk to strengthen myself a little.'

When Ahl as-Sufa came, he ordered me to serve them. I wondered what would be left for me of this milk. However, there was no escape from obedience to Allah and His Messenger.

I went and invited them to the Prophet's house. They came,

the Prophet ﷺ gave them permission to enter, and they began to take their seats in the house.

The Prophet ﷺ said, 'O Abu Hurayrah!'

I said, 'At your service, O Messenger of Allah!'

He said, 'Take this and give it to them.'

I took the bowl and began to serve it to them one by one, so a person would take it and drink his fill from it and return it to me. I would then give it to the next person who would drink to his fill and return it to me. I would then give it to the third person who would do the same. This happened until I finally reached the Prophet ﷺ. By this time all of them had drunk to their fill.

The Prophet ﷺ took the bowl and placed it in my hands. He looked at me with a smile and said, 'O Abu Hurayrah!'

I said, 'At your service, O Messenger of Allah!'

He said, 'It seems only you and I are left.'

I said, 'That's right, O Messenger of Allah.'

He said, 'Have a seat and drink.'

I sat down and drank some.

He said, 'Drink more, so I drank more.'

He continued to say, 'Drink more, until I finally said, 'No. I swear by the one who has sent you with the truth, I do not have any space left!'

He said, 'Give it to me, then.'

I gave it to him. He praised Allah, said 'Bismillah' and drank the rest of the milk.'" (al-Bukhari)

The art of generosity has many secrets. One of its secrets is that instead of being generous to a person directly, be generous to those he loves. Due to this, he will love you.

A friends of mine once visited me. He had with him a small bag of sweets and toys, which I do not think would have cost him more than a few Riyals. He gave it to me and said, "This is for the children!" My children were very happy, as was I, for he made me realise that he liked to make my children happy.

One of the predecessors was a poor scholar. His students would give him various gifts, such as dates and flour, every now and then. Whenever a student gave him a gift, the teacher would remain pleasant with him for as long as his gift remained, but when it ran out, he would go back to his previous ways. A student consequently came up with the idea that he should give him a gift which was of a reasonable price and would also last. He therefore gave him a bag of salt as a gift, for salt is cheap and long-lasting as only a very small amount of it is used in food. One bag alone would have sufficed him for a year or two.

If you were to ask me which of two gifts you wish to give to your friend, one being an expensive perfume and the other a clock with his name engraved on it, I would chose the clock simply because it would last for longer and is always noticeable. Also, perhaps it may even be cheaper.

I recall once giving a student of mine a clock with his name engraved on it. He graduated from the university and years went by. I then visited a city to deliver a lecture and was surprised that he came to attend the lecture and then invited me over to his house. When I entered the lounge, he pointed at the clock

on the wall and said, "This is the most precious gift I have been given." This was seven years after he graduated. And, in fact, this clock was not expensive at all, but its sentimental value was much more.

Point of view…

Opportunities to win people's hearts do not come often.

(74)

Restraining oneself from harming others

There was a man hated by everyone because none was ever spared from his harm. If he spared a person from his hand, he would not spare him from his tongue. If he forgot to speak ill of a person in his presence, then he would not forget to speak ill of him in his absence. The man was certainly disliked by all and was too much for anyone to bear.

If you think about society, you will realise for certain that, usually, only those who are more blessed than others are the ones to abuse others. It is the strong that abuse the weak by pushing them away, kicking them, beating them, or belittling them. He would act like a lion with them, but in testing situations be is like an ostrich. The rich person will transgress against the poor, disgrace them in public gatherings and interrupt them as they speak. People in higher positions are guiltier of such crimes, and the same is witnessed with all those whom Allah has blessed with good fortune.

Not only are such people loathed, but whenever a calamity befalls them, people rejoice and wish that they lose all the respect that others may have for them. Indeed people wish that they would become totally bankrupt!

Look at the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. One day he sat with his companions and asked, "Do you know who is the barkrupt one?"

They replied, "A bankrupt person, as we know it, is the one who neither has a dirham nor or any possessions."

He said, "Rather, the bankrupt person from my ummah is the one who comes on the Day of Resurrection with prayers, fasts and charity. Yet, it is discovered that he cursed this person, accused that person, illegally possessed this person's property, murdered that person and hit this person. All those he oppressed will be given from his good deeds. If his good deeds are gone before the account is settled, their bad deeds will be taken and placed into his account, and then he will be thrown in the fire." (Muslim)

For this reason, the Prophet ﷺ would avoid harming anybody. 'A'ishah – may Allah be pleased with her – said, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ never struck anything with his hand: neither a woman nor a servant, except during a battle. He never sought revenge from the one who inflicted harm upon him, unless one of Allah's sanctities were violated. Only then he would seek revenge for Allah." (Muslim)

Generally speaking, whoever uses the blessings that Allah has given him to cause harm to others is disliked. Allah may even afflict such a person before punishing him in the Hereafter, thereby soothing and healing the wounds of those he harmed.

I recall a friend who was a student of law and had memorised the Qur'an. He was a pious man to whom many people would come for treatment, so he would recite some Islamic incanta-

tions from the Qur'an, and Allah would cure by his hands whoever He willed.

One day, a man came to him who looked very rich. He sat in front of the him and said, "O Shaykh, I have severe pains in my left hand. I can neither sleep at night nor rest in the day. I have visited many professional doctors, and they have run several tests on me. They asked me to do exercises, but none of this has helped me. The pain only continues to increase and it has made my life a torment. Dear Shaykh, I am a businessman and an owner of a number of institutions and companies. I fear that I may be afflicted with an evil eye, or someone may have put a spell on me."

The brother said to me, "I recited over him Surat al-Fatihah, Ayat al-Kursi, Surat al-Ikhlas and the last two Surahs of the Qur'an, and yet his condition did not change. He thanked me and left only to return to me after a few days complaining of the same pain. I recited over him again, he went and came back. I recited over him again, yet he did not seem to recover at all.

When his pain became really severe, I said to him, 'Perhaps your ailment is a punishment for a sin you committed, perhaps you wronged a weak person or took someone's right. Perhaps you oppressed someone by not giving him his share of his wealth, etc. If you did any of this, then hurry to repent for your crimes and give up the rights of others that you may have usurped. Seek Allah's forgiveness for all your past sins.'

The businessman did not like what I had said, he replied to me quite arrogantly, 'Never! I have never wronged anyone! I have never transgressed anyone's rights! But I thank you for your advice, anyway!' and left.

Many days passed by and I didn't see the man again. I thought that perhaps he didn't like my advice, but I didn't care since all I had done was to give him a word of advice. I then met him somewhere by mere coincidence. He came up to me and greeted me very joyfully.

I asked him, 'What's the latest?'

He said, 'Al-Hamdulillah, my hand is fine, without any medicine or treatment!'

I said, 'How is that?'

He said, 'When I left after visiting you, I began to think about what you said and browsed through my memory to see who I could have wronged, or whose rights I might have taken. I then remembered that a few years ago, when I was building my mansion, there was a piece of land next to my property which I wanted to be appended to mine to beautify my house further. The land was the property of a widow whose husband had died, leaving behind several orphans. I wanted the woman to sell the property, but she refused. She said, 'What would I do with the value of this plot of land? I would rather leave it for my children until they grow older. I fear that if I sell it, our wealth may scatter and we may have nothing left.' I requested several times that she should sell it, but she always refused.

I said, 'What did you do then?'

He said, 'I used my own way of getting hold of her land.'

I said, 'Your own way?'

He said, 'Yes. I have many connections and know many people. I managed to get myself permission for construction on her

land, and this is how I managed to attach the land to mine.'

I said, 'And the orphans?'

He said, 'She heard about what had happened to her land. She used to come around and scream at the builders to try to prevent them from working, but they would simply laugh at her, thinking that she was mad! In reality, I was the one who was mad and not her. She used to cry and raise her hands to the sky. I saw this with my own eyes. Perhaps the prayers she made against me in the darkest hours of the night were even more serious…'

I said, 'I see. Go ahead'

He said, 'I went to look for her until I found her. I visited her and cried and begged her to forgive me. I stayed with her until she accepted my compensation for her land. She then prayed for me and forgave me. By Allah, as soon as she lowered her hands after praying, my hand felt better.

The businessman then looked down, raised his head again and said, 'her prayer affected me the way no medicine could.'"

They say…

As you sleep, the oppressed remains alert.

He prays against you, while Allah's eyes never sleep.

(75)

Do not gain enemies

You will find as you deal with people that everyone has a different natur e. Some are very angry while others are very cold. Some are intelligent while others are foolish. Some are learned while others are ignorant. Some have good opinions of others while others do not.

The oppressor always forgets about those whom he has oppressed and thinks he is the most just of all people. The foolish person thinks he is the most intelligent of all people. The senseless person thinks he is the wisest person in the world!

I recall when I was a young man – although I still think I am one – when I was at the beginning of my secondary education, there came to us a very cumbersome guest. I don't know if he had even finished his primary education or not, But what I can say for sure is that he could read and write. When he came, I was busy with a religious issue for which I was trying to find a solution. I offered him what I would offer to any other guest. I then took the phone and tried to contact Shaykh Abd al-'Aziz bin Baz – may Allah have mercy on him – to ask him for an answer, but the Shaykh was not there.

This guest noticed that I am extremely busy and asked, "Who

are you trying to call?"

I said, "Shaykh Ibn Baz. I need to ask him an important question."

He said to me with great confidence, "SubhanAllah! You are asking Ibn Baz, whilst I am alive!"

You would find many such people in real life. Try to bear their cumbersome attitude, treat them kindly and earn their love. Try your best not to gain enemies for yourself. You have not been put in charge of them by Allah. So, save whoever you can and do not torment yourself unnecessarily.

A thought...

Life is too short to gain enemies.

(76)

The tongue is king

I was thinking about factors that cause hatred and arguments between people and make them cumbersome for each other, such that one may not even like to see or be in someone's company, or travel with him, or even attend his wedding. I discovered that it is the tongue that causes a man to stoop to such a level. How often brothers or couples quarrel all because of verbal abuse, backbiting or insults!

When we are able to deliver our thoughts to others with beautiful manners, why then resort to horrible ones?

There was once a king who saw in a dream that all his teeth had fallen out. He called a dream-interpreter, told him what he saw in the dream, and asked him to interpret it.

When the interpreter heard the dream his complexion changed and he began to repeat, "Allah's refuge is sought! Allah's refuge is sought!"

The king became worried and asked, "What is the interpretation of my dream?"

The interpreter said, "After many years pass, your wife and children will die and you will be all alone in your kingdom!"

The king screamed, became furious, and began to hurl abuses

and insults. He then ordered that the interpreter be imprisoned and called another interpreter, related to him what he saw in the dream and asked him for its interpretation.

The dream interpreter smiled and said, "Glad tidings, dear king!"

The king said, "What is the interpretation of the dream?"

The interpreter said, "It means that you will live for very long - so long that you will be the last of your family to die, and you will remain a king your entire life."

The king became very pleased, showered him with gifts and remained content with him whilst angry with the first dream-interpreter. If you contemplate, you will realise that both of the interpretations were the same, the difference was in the way in which the interpretation was conveyed. Hence, the tongue is the master.

The Prophet ﷺ said in a Hadeeth, "When the son of Adam wakes up in the morning, all of his body parts humble themselves in front of the tongue and say, 'Fear Allah with regards to our rights! Our wellbeing depends on you. If you remain upright, so shall we. If you become crooked so shall we.'" (Ahmad & at-Tirmidhi, Hasan)

Yes, by Allah, the tongue is master. It is master as it delivers the Friday sermon. It is master as it rectifies people's relationships. It is master as it bargains in the marketplace. It is master as it debates in a court of law.

However, this does not mean that if a person loses his tongue his life ends. Rather, those with strong determination remain he-

roes, no matter how many faculties they lose.

My friend, Abu ‘Abdullah, is no different to the rest of my friends, but he is – and Allah bears witness to this – the most eager of them all to do good works. He is involved in a number of da’wah projects, including the da’wah work he does during his work. He works as a translator in an institute for the deaf and dumb.

One day he called me and said, “What do think if I bring to your mosque two men from the institute of the deaf to deliver a lecture to the people?”

I became surprised and said, “The deaf delivering a lecture to those who hear?”

He said, “Yes! Let us come this Sunday.”

I impatiently waited until Sunday. When it finally came, I stood by the door of the mosque waiting for them, until Abu ‘Abdullah arrived in his car and parked it near the main doors of the mosque. He then got out of the car along with two men. One of them was walking next to him, whilst the other was being held by Abu ‘Abdullah and being led by his hand.

I looked at the first of them to notice that he was deaf and dumb. He could not hear or speak, but he could see. I looked at the second one to notice that he was deaf, dumb and blind. He could neither hear, nor speak nor see. I stretched forth by hand and shook Abu ‘Abdullah’s hand. The man to his right – later I found out his name was Ahmad – was looking at me with a smile, so I stretched forth my hand to shake hands with him.

Abu ‘Abdullah then said to me pointing to the blind man,

"Greet Fayiz, too."

I said, "As-Salaamu 'Alaykum, Fayiz!"

Abu 'Abdullah said, "Hold his hand, as he can neither hear or see you."

I placed my hand in his, and he grabbed my hand firmly and shook it.

They then entered the mosque. After the prayer, Abu 'Abdullah sat on a chair with Ahmad sitting on his right and Fayiz sitting on his left. The people were watching in amazement. They were not accustomed to a deaf person sitting on a chair and delivering a lecture!

Abu 'Abdullah then turned to Ahmad and said something in sign language. Ahmad responded to him in sign language. The people watched but did not understanding anything, so I suggested to Abu 'Abdullah that he translate what he said, as no one is able to understand sign language except the deaf or someone well-versed in sign language. Abu 'Abdullah brought the microphone close and said, "Ahmad is relating to you the story of how he was guided." He said, "I was born deaf and raised in Jeddah. My family would neither cater for me nor pay any attention to me. I used to see people going to the mosque, but I wouldn't know why! I would often notice my father laying down a prayer mat, prostrating and bowing, but I wouldn't know what he was doing. Whenever I asked my family about it, they would belittle me and never answer my questions."

Then Abu 'Abdullah became quiet and said something to Ahmad in sign language. Ahmad then continued with his speech in sign language and suddenly his complexion changed, as if he

had been emotionally affected. Abu 'Abdullah lowered his head as Ahmad began to cry profusely. Many among the audience were affected by this although they had no idea why he was crying. He continued to speak in sign language until he stopped.

Abu 'Abdullah then said, "Ahmad is now relating to you the period in his life when he changed: how he came to know about Allah and prayer due to a person on the street who taught him out of pity for him, and how, when he began to pray, he felt closer to Allah by imagining the great reward awaiting him due to his condition as well as how he got to taste the sweetness of faith."

Abu 'Abdullah continued to relate the rest of his story as the people listened in amazement.

However, I was busy thinking something else! I would look at Ahmad and then at Fayiz and say to myself, "Ahmad can see and knows sign language, which is why Abu 'Abdullah is able to communicate with him. I wonder how he is going to communicate with Fayiz knowing he can neither see, hear nor speak?"

Ahmad finished delivering his lecture and began wiping away his tears. Meanwhile, Abu 'Abdullah turned to Fayiz.

I asked myself, "What is he going to do?"

Abu 'Abdullah struck Fayiz's knee with his fingers, and there he was, delivering a very moving lecture. Any idea how he delivered that lecture? Did he speak? How could he, for he was dumb! Did he use sign language? How could he, for he was blind and had never learnt sign language! He delivered his lecture by 'touch' language.

Abu 'Abdullah, who was the translator, placed his hand be-

tween Fayiz's hands. Fayiz would then touch his hand in particular ways by which Abu 'Abdullah knew what Fayiz was trying to say. He would then relate to us what he understood from Fayiz. Sometimes it would take up to a quarter of an hour to understand what he was trying to say.

Fayiz would then sit still, not knowing whether the translator had finished translating or not, as he was of course neither able to hear nor see. When the translator would finish speaking, he would strike Fayiz's knee once again. Fayiz would then stretch out his hands and grab hold of the translator's hand and touch it in particular ways to convey his message.

The people remained seated, watching Fayiz and the translator communicating with amazement. Fayiz was encouraging the audience to repent to Allah for their sins. He would at times hold his ears, then his tongue, and then place his hands over his eyes. We would not understand what he meant until Abu 'Abdullah translated for us. He was advising the people to guard their ears and eyes lest they fall into the forbidden. As I looked at the people, I noticed some people sigh, "SubhanAllah", others whispered to the person sitting next to them, others were watching with great interest and still others were crying.

As for me, mind had wandered off very far indeed. I began to contemplate on the faculties Fayiz had in comparison to what the audience were blessed with, and contrasted that with Fayiz's services for the religion in comparison to that of the audience.

Surely the concern that this blind, deaf and dumb person had for Islam was greater than the concern in the hearts of all the audience combined!

Although the man had a very limited number of faculties, he was exhausting himself in service to this religion. He felt as if he was a soldier of Islam, responsible for anyone who sinned or fell short. He was constantly moving his hand, as if he was admonishing, "For how much longer will you abandon the prayer? For how much longer will you continue to look at the Haram? For how much longer will you continue with your disgraceful acts? For how much longer will you continue to consume Haram? For how much longer will you continue upon Shirk? For how much longer? Is it not enough that its enemies are waging a war against our religion? Why do you have to join the war against our religion?"

The poor man's complexion would often change as he shared what he had in his heart with the audience, who were in turn were greatly affected. Although I did not turn around to look at the people, I could still hear people crying and sighing "SubhanAllah!"

Fayiz eventually finished his lecture and got up, as Abu 'Abdullah held his hand. The audience came to him to greet him. I saw him greeting them and it was obvious to me that he treated everyone equally. He greeted everyone and did not distinguish between rich and poor, leaders and followers. I thought to myself that if only all people were like Fayiz!

Abu 'Abdullah took Fayiz out of the mosque. I walked by their side as they made their way to the car. I saw Fayiz and the translator joking with each other and thought to myself how insignificant this world was! How many people have not been afflicted with a quarter of Fayiz's problems, and yet they are still

unable to overcome their sadness and sorrow!

How about those who have chronic illnesses, such as kidney failure, paralysis, thrombus, diabetes or other impediments? Why don't they enjoy their lives and learn to live with the reality?

How wonderful it is when Allah afflicts His servant and then looks into his heart to find that he is still thankful, pleased and yearning for his reward from Him!

Many days have passed, and yet Fayiz's picture is still embedded in my memory. If Fayiz can be so successful in life and earn the love of people being blind, dumb and deaf, then how about the one who has been blessed with a tongue, sight and hearing?

Use your tongue to gain people's love!

Reality...

A man's flesh is not fit for eating nor is his skin fit for clothing – there is nothing in him except the sweetness of his tongue.

(77)

Control your tongue

A person may utter a callus word that displeases Allah for which He will be angry with him until the day He meets him. This is why the Prophet ﷺ warned people from uttering something callously without contemplating its consequences.

Not controlling the tongue may lead one to his own destruction.

Guard your tongue, O man!

Don't let it nip you, for it is a serpent!

How many victims of their tongues rest in their graves,

Whom even the bravest of men would dread to meet!

How many women have been divorced by their husbands merely due to the tongue! A man falls into an argument with his wife, and she begins to repeatedly challenge him, "Divorce me! I challenge you to divorce me! Divorce me if you are a man!"

He would order her to be silent, and perhaps shout at and scold her. When things get out of hand, he destroys his own household by eventually telling her that she is indeed divorced.

For this reason, the Prophet ﷺ advised that when a person gets angry, he should observe silence, because he otherwise

would not be able to control his tongue.

Some time ago, I intervened in a dispute between two families. The story was that an intelligent old man, who I think was beyond sixty years of age, went out hunting with his friends. They were all around the same age. During the trip they began to speak about old memories and started discussing properties owned by their grandfathers. There then arose a dispute between two of them over a piece of land which one of them owned and the other claimed belonged to his grandfather.

After a while, the discussion got out of hand and the landowner said to his friend, "By Allah, if I see you anywhere near my land, I will empty this out in your head!" He then grabbed hold of his gun, pointed it a couple of meters above the man's head, and pulled the trigger. Other men present got up from their seats and were about to fight, but their friends restrained them and they all went back to their homes.

The man who was fired upon was unable to sleep that night, engulfed with rage. The next morning, he decided to cure his rage by exacting revenge from his friend. He grabbed his AK47 and went out looking for his friend. He came across him sitting in his car in front of a girls' school. The man had retired and was thereafter working as a driver for teachers' transportation. He had parked his car outside the school and was waiting for the teachers to come out. Next to his car was a group of other cars that looked very similar as they were all transportation vehicles for school teachers and students.

The man hid behind a tree at a distance so that he would not be spotted. He also had weak eyesight. He pointed the gun

towards a driver who looked like his friend and tried his best to aim for his head. He then pressed the trigger. A loud noise was heard as three rounds were shot. The bullets pierced the driver's head.

The people fled in terror whilst the students screamed in panic. The police arrived at the scene and surrounded the area. The bullets had shattered the driver's skull and he had obviously died. As for the murderer, he walked very calmly to a police station, told the police the whole story and said, "I have killed so-and-so and thereby relieved my heart. You may now kill me, burn me or imprison me. Do what you wish!"

The investigating police officer went to the crime scene and when he looked at the victim's ID card, he was stunned. He discovered that the victim was not the person the murderer wanted to kill! Rather, he was a completely different person who had nothing to do with the episode.

The officer then made his way to the station along with the man who was supposed to be the victim, stood outside the cell and said, "O so-and-so! Did you claim that you killed this man? The bullets have killed someone else, instead!"

The murderer, upon hearing this, screamed hysterically until he fell unconscious. He remained in that state for a few days. and after he recovered, he was placed behind bars. A judge then passed the verdict that the capital punishment for murder be implemented on him.

How right Abu Bakr was when he said, "Nothing is as deserving of long-term imprisonment as the tongue!"

I can never forget the story of the Caliph who once sat with

his companion, laughing and joking with him. The devil decided to play with their minds so he made them drink alcohol. When they became completely intoxicated, and the mother of all evils (i.e. alcohol) had dominated their minds, one of them began to act extremely foolishly. The Caliph turned to his gatekeeper, pointed to his companion, and said, "Kill him!"

Whenever this Caliph passed an order, he was never asked to review his decision. The gatekeeper therefore grabbed his companion by his feet and dragged him out as he kept shouting and begging the Caliph for mercy. But the Caliph kept laughing and saying, "Kill him! Kill him!" He was executed and his body was dumped in an abandoned well.

The next morning the Caliph woke up and desired some-one's company, so he said, "Call my companion!"

It was said, "We have killed him!"

He said, "You have killed him? Why? Who ordered you to kill him?"

They said, "You told us to kill him yesterday", then they told him the whole story.

The Caliph remained silent, lowered his head in sorrow and said, "If only words were able to say to their speaker, 'Please do not utter me!'"

To return to our topic, how often it is that people repel others from themselves, make them resentful towards them, or manage to cause trouble for themselves by not controlling their tongues!

Ibn al-Jawzi said, "It is amazing how many people are strong

enough to abstain from consuming unlawful wealth, fornication and theft and yet are unable to abstain from moving their tongues. You will see such people speaking ill of others and unable to prevent themselves from doing so."

Interestingly...

Animals have long tongues, yet they cannot speak.

Man has a relatively short tongue, yet he cannot keep silent.

(78)

The key

Flattery is the key to people's hearts. From the most fantastic of skills that one can exercise is to train himself to discover the positive points in people and praise them for these points before drawing their attention to a fault.

Many people reject advice not because of arrogance or the lack of conviction that they are at fault, but only because the one advising does not give the advice in an appropriate fashion.

Suppose you go to a government hospital for treatment. When you approach the reception, you find the receptionist to be a young man who is engrossed in his newspaper whilst smoking cigarettes, heedless about whatever may be happening around him.

You notice that there is an old man standing at the reception holding a small baby in one hand, and an appointment letter in the other, waiting for the receptionist to direct him to see the relevant doctor. Next to him there is an old woman carrying a little girl who is shivering with fever, waiting for the receptionist to finish reading the latest news about the football club he supports, so he can direct her to the paediatrician.

When you see this situation, you become uptight - and this

is understandable - and scream at the receptionist, "Hey you! Are you in a hospital or elsewhere? Don't you fear Allah? The patients are moaning in pain and you are just sitting there reading your paper and having a smoke! This is amazing! Someone like you can only be dealt with by lodging a complaint to your manager! In fact, you should be sacked!"

You begin to strike the receptionist like thunderbolts with these statements. Let us suppose that he does not respond to you, or at least he does not scream back at you. Let us suppose that he puts his newspaper aside and directs the patients to the relevant doctors. Do you think that you have successfully solved the problem? Not at all! Yes, you did deal with the crisis at hand, but you did not solve the problem, because, even if he responds positively to you now, he will return and do the same tomorrow or the day after.

How should you then deal with him?

You should first quell your rage and then approach him. Deal with him rationally and not emotionally. Do not let the intolerable scene affect the way you behave. Smile, even if you are angry, even if it be a fake smile.

Say to him, "as-Salaamu 'alaykum!"

He would respond, as he looks at the photograph of his favourite player, "alaykum al-Salaam, please wait a second..."

Say to him anything that would make him turn to you, such as, "How are you doing? Good evening to you, by the way!"

He would surely raise his head and say, "al-hamdulillah, I am fine." You have now already accomplished half of the mission.

Be kind to him by flattering him, "Believe me, I don't think someone like you should work at reception."

He will be surprised and ask, "Why is that?"

Say to him, "Because a bright face such as yours, if a patient were to see it, his illness would disappear and he wouldn't need to see a doctor anymore!"

He would smile back at you in surprise and become excited. Now he is ready to accept advice.

He would say to you, "How can I help you?"

You then say to him, "Dear brother, do you see this old man here and this old woman? Why don't you deal with them first?"

He will get hold of their appointment letters and direct them to the relevant doctors. He will then take your appointment letter. When he has finished dealing with your letter and hands it over to you, you would say to him, "SubhaanAllah! This is the first time I have met you, and you have already entered into my heart! I don't know how! By Allah, you are more beloved to me than thousands of others!" And you haven't lied since he definitely is more beloved to you than millions of disbelievers!

He would be very pleased and thank you for your kindness. You can then say to him, "I have some words to offer to you, but I fear you might get upset."

He would say, "Not at all! Please go ahead!"

You can then give him the advice, "Allah has blessed you with this job. You are working right at the forefront of the hospital. You are also an example to others. It would be nice if you were to be a little kind to the patients and show concern over them.

Perhaps the old man or the old woman would pray for you in the darkness of the night."

He would most certainly lower his head in shame as you speak and say, "Thank you very much. May Allah reward you."

In this manner, you should try to deal with anyone whose manners need reformation. If you know of a person who takes his prayers lightly, or a father who doesn't care much about his daughters' appearance due to which they do not cover properly, or a young man who is disobedient to his parents, and you want to rectify their faults, then you must use the appropriate skills.

Use kind words to correct others' faults. Be well-mannered and respectful towards their opinion. Tell them, "I am only advising you because I know you will accept my advice."

Allah says in the Qur'an, "O you who believe! When you consult the Messenger in private, spend something in charity before your private consultation."

The wise educator, the Prophet ﷺ, would offer advice so skilfully that the people would have no choice but to accept the advice. Once, he decided to teach Mu'adh some words he wanted him to say after the prayers in remembrance of Allah. He turned to Mu'adh and said, "By Allah, I love you! So please do not forget to say at the end of each prayer, 'O Allah, help me to remember you, thank you, and worship you in the finest manner."

I ask you by Allah, what is the connection between the first part of the Prophet's speech, "By Allah, I love you...", and the second part of his speech, "Do not forget to say, O Allah! Help me to remember you."?

Perhaps it would have been more appropriate when he had said, "I love you..." to say, "...and I would like you to marry my daughter" – for example, or, "I want to give you some wealth", or, "I want to invite you over for dinner."

However, after informing him that he loved him, he taught him instead to say a few words in Allah's remembrance! This surely deserves contemplation.

Why did he say, "I love you..."? He said it to mentally prepare him to take the advice that followed positively, by showing him true emotional concern. When Mu'adh's soul felt content after hearing those words, the Prophet ﷺ then gave him the advice.

On another occasion, the Prophet ﷺ took hold of 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud's right hand by his right hand and then placed his left hand on top, as a gesture of kindness in order to mentally prepare him for advice. He then said, "O 'Abdullah, when you sit for at-Tashahhud in the prayer, you should say, 'Salutations to Allah. All acts of worship and good deeds are for Him. Peace and the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you, O Prophet!"

'Abdullah bin Mas'ud retained this in his memory. After many years had passed and the Prophet ﷺ had died, 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud used to proudly relate this incident saying, "The Prophet ﷺ taught me the Tashahhud whilst my hand was between his hands."

On another occasion, the Prophet ﷺ noticed that 'Umar – may Allah be pleased with him – was making Tawaf around the Ka'bah and as he wished to touch the black stone, he jostled through the crowds and kissed it. 'Umar was very muscular and strong, and on his way to the black stone he could have harmed

the weak. The Prophet ﷺ wanted to advise him in that regard, so, in order to make him mentally prepared for advice, he started by saying, "O 'Umar, you are a strong person." 'Umar became pleased upon hearing this. The Prophet ﷺ then said, "Do not jostle through the crowds to reach the black stone."

Once he wanted to encourage Ibn 'Umar to perform the night prayers, so he said, "How good a man is 'Abdullah! if only he performed the night prayers." In another narration, it is reported that he said, "O 'Abdullah! Don't be like so-and-so. He used to perform the night prayers only to stop doing so."

Yes, the Prophet ﷺ would use these methods with all people, and especially with the noble.

In the early period of the prophethood, there were those who accepted Islam and those who rejected it. There was a man in Madinah known as Suwayd bin as-Samit. He was a noble man amongst his people and considered a very intelligent poet. He had memorised many quotes of wise men, so much so that it was said that he had memorised everything that has been related from Luqman the wise. On account of this, people used to refer to him as al-Kamil (i.e. the complete man) due to his excellent poetry, nobility and lineage.

One day, Suwayd bin al-Samit came to Makkah to either perform Hajj or 'Umrah. News of his arrival spread amongst the people and everyone wanted to see him. When the Prophet ﷺ heard about him, he visited him and called him to Allah and Islam. He began to discuss with him monotheism and the message of Islam, and informed him that he was a prophet who had received the Qur'an in revelation, and that this Qur'an was the word of

Allah containing admonitions and laws.

Suwayd said to him, "Perhaps what you have is similar to what I have?"

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "What do you have?"

He said, "I have the wisdom of Luqman."

The Prophet ﷺ, upon hearing this, did not scold or belittle him, even though he was comparing Allah's speech to that of a man. He was instead gentle with him.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Let me hear some."

Suwayd then began to read whatever he remembered of Luqman's wisdom, whilst the Prophet ﷺ listened to him attentively. When Suwayd finished, the Prophet ﷺ said to him, "This is very good."

He then said, in order to get Suwayd more interested, "What I have is even better. It is the Qur'an which Allah has revealed. It is all guidance and light."

The Prophet ﷺ then recited the Qur'an to him and called him to accept Islam as Suwayd listened attentively. When the Prophet ﷺ had finished talking, it was obvious that Suwayd was greatly affected by it. He said, "This is very good."

Suwayd then parted from the Prophet ﷺ after being greatly affected by what he had heard. Thereafter, he left for Madinah, and it wasn't long until war broke out between the two tribes, al-Aws and al-Khazraj. Suwayd was from al-Aws and he was subsequently killed by al-Khazraj. This happened before the Prophet ﷺ migrated to Madinah. It is not known whether he accepted Islam or not, but some men from his tribe have stated that when

he died he was a Muslim.

Think about how the Prophet ﷺ treated him and how he captured his heart by his manners without being harsh.

In short...

Flatter generously. Criticise scantily.

(79)

The emotional bank balance

We dictate how others think of us. If a person were to see you in the market and frown at you, then see you at the grocer's and frown at you, and then you bump into him at a wedding party and see him frowning at you, you would form a picture of him in your mind. If you were to see him again, or even hear of him again, his frowning face would instantly come mind. Isn't that true?

If a person meets you with a smile, then he meets you elsewhere with a smile, and so on, there will be a positive smiling picture of him imprinted in your mind.

This is concerning someone with whom you have no relationship and only meet with every now and then. But as for those whom we meet all the time, like a wife, children, work colleagues and neighbours, then we don't always deal with them in the same manner. Yes, they will see us laughing and joking, but no doubt they will also see us sometimes angry, frowning, argumentative or even insulting because we are, after all, human beings.

Consequently, their love for us is governed by our good or bad conduct towards them. If you wish, you can say that their love for us is in proportion to the emotional credit that we may

have in our accounts with them. How so?

When you show good conduct towards a person, you are in reality depositing fond memories about yourself in his memory register. In other words, it is as if he has opened up an account for you in his heart where he keeps safe his love and respect for you. Thereafter, your bank balance either increases or decreases. Hence, each time you meet him with a smile, your emotional bank balance increases. Each time you give him a gift, it also increases. Every act of courtesy increases it further. Similarly, each time you offend, insult or curse a person, you make a withdrawal from that emotional bank balance.

Similarly, if you have a huge balance with a person and one day end up angering him, you withdraw only a small percentage from your emotional bank balance due to the huge original balance.

If a beloved comes with one vice,

His virtues come to the rescue with a thousand intercessors

However, if you don't have an emotional bank balance with a person to begin with and then begin to withdraw, then your account with him will be in deficit. Subsequently, he may develop a dislike for you since you continue to withdraw but never deposit.

You may have heard the story about a wife who was divorced by her husband. When asked about the reason for the divorce, she said, "It was a trivial reason. He wanted me to go with him to see his sister and I refused. He became angry and began insulting and cursing me, and then eventually divorced me!"

If you contemplate a little why she got divorced, you would discover that the reason was not as trivial as she claimed. Rather, the incident was the last straw that broke the camel's back!

It is said that there was once a man who had a strong camel. One day he decided to travel, so he placed all his belongings on the camel's back and tied it up. The poor camel tried to withstand the pressure as he managed to place on its back the load of four camels. The camel began to waver as the people shouted at the man saying, "Enough!" But the man didn't listen. He finally took a belt made out of straw and placed it on the camel, saying, "This is very light, and this is the last thing I will place on it." As soon as he placed the belt on it, the camel fell to the ground. Thus, his story became an idiom and it was said, "The last straw which broke the camel's back!"

If you think about it, you will realise that the belt was quite innocent, for it was not the belt that broke the camel's back. Rather, the back was broken due to the heavy overall load that was placed on it, which it tried to withstand with patience until it could stand it no longer. The miniscule weight of the belt then finally broke its back.

The same goes for the woman who was divorced by her husband. I can say for certain that the reason was not just the fact that she refused to visit his sister. Rather, it was a number of things including refusing to fulfil his requests and his wishes, the lack of love between the two, her arrogance and the lack of respect she had for his views. She continued to withdraw from her emotional bank account without depositing anything. She continued to hurt him without healing his wounds. He continued

to bear her with patience, until this incident happened which broke the camel's back.

If she were to have contributed to her emotional bank account on a regular basis by meeting him nicely, spoiling him a little, making herself beloved to him, joking and being light-hearted with him, taking care of his food and clothes and respecting his views, she would have had a huge emotional bank balance. She would have been a millionaire in his heart. Consequently, it would not have mattered much if her emotional bank balance decreased slightly because her wrong actions would have disappeared in the sea of her virtues.

You can say the same about a troublemaking student who has made one mistake due to which his teacher become very angry and perhaps hit him, or threw him out of the classroom. Then the student may complain, "Such-and-such a colleague of mine does things much worse than me, yet he isn't punished! As for me, then I didn't do anything, except that I made a joke without permission." He doesn't realise that the joke was the last straw which broke the camel's back. He had always hurt his teacher without healing his wounds. The same can be said about colleagues or neighbours who argue amongst each other.

Hence, we are always in need of depositing into the emotional bank balance that lies in people's hearts. The husband should look for opportunities to deposit into his wife's heart and continue to increase his points. The wife should do the same. The son should likewise deposit some love in his father's heart, as should the teacher with his students and a person with his brother. In fact, even the manager should do the same with those

who work under him.

In short...

If a beloved comes with one vice,

His virtues come to the rescue with a thousand intercessors

(80)

The magician

“It is free to talk, so please, say some sweet words!” This is how the poor lady began chastising her husband. Yes, he never fell short in terms of nourishing and clothing her, but he would never try to enchant her with sweet talk. All sensible people agree that the most important quality a salesman should have is to be charming in his speech, such that he repeatedly says, “Please! Welcome! Leave your worries to us!’ The salesman would continue to increase the price as he adds his own charm. If he is able to express himself well, describe his product in a positive way and convince the customers to buy it, there is no doubt he would be successful.

All experienced people concur that from the most important qualities in a receptionist is that he should be well-spoken and eloquent. Each time he says, “Yes, sure, OK, “We are at your sevice.” It should be pleasing to the ears.

A woman may become captivated by the love of her husband, even if he may be stingy and not so handsome, by being enchanted by his speech.

I remember that an adolescent man loved to be adventurous with girls. He had an amazing ability to enchant them with his

singing. How many girls were captivated by his love and clung to him like the shoes on his feet! What is more amazing is that he neither had a beautiful car to lure them with, nor did he have money to shower them with gifts. He wasn't even gifted with a charming and beautiful face. Rather, I ask Allah that none is ever tested by looking at his face! But his jaws possessed a tongue with which he would mesmerise anyone and anything he spoke to. With his tongue he would captivate girls and put them under a spell.

Whoever looks at the life of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and history would discover astounding incidents. One day there came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ three men who were considered leaders among their people: Qays bin 'Asim, al-Zabarqan bin Badr and 'Amr bin al-Ahtam. They were all from the tribe of Tamim. They began to praise each other, so al-Zabarqan said, "O Messenger of Allah, I am the leader of Tamim. I am the one who is obeyed and responded to amongst them. I forbid them from oppression and guarantee their rights." He then pointed to the other leader, 'Amr bin al-Ahtam and said, "He knows what I am talking about."

'Amr then praised him saying, "By Allah, O Messenger of Allah! He is fierce in opposition, defends his flank and is obeyed by his people." 'Amr then fell silent and did not praise him more.

Al-Zarbaqan was expecting to hear more in praise, but 'Amr was rather brief. Al-Zarbaqan became angry since he had wished that he would have been praised slightly more. He thought that he was envious over his leadership, so he said, "By Allah, O Messenger of Allah, he knows what he said, and nothing prevented

him from saying more except that he envies me for my leadership!"

Thereupon, 'Amr became angry and said, "Would I envy you for your leadership? By Allah you are an ignoble uncle who has just acquired some wealth from a stupid father and are the most wasteful in your family! By Allah, O Messenger of Allah, I was truthful in what I said initially, and I have not lied in what I have said to you now. When I was happy, I said the best I could about him, and when I became angry, I said the worst I could. By Allah, I was correct both times!"

The Prophet ﷺ was so surprised at the speed at which he argued so convincingly and so skilfully that he said, "Some rhetoric is magic! Some rhetoric is magic!" (al-Hakim with a disputed chain, although the origin of the hadeeth is in al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Thus, be skilful with your tongue. If someone asks you for a pen, say, "Sure, here you are..." If someone says, "I have a request...", say, "At your service!" If he says, "I would like you to do a favour for me", you should say, "By all means!"

Use the various modes of speech that would move people's emotions. Speak to your mother in a soft tone and by using beautiful words, and the same goes for your father, wife, children and colleagues. Speaking in this manner would not cost you anything, but would only enchant those you speak to and get rid of any ill feelings they may have for you.

Just look at the Ansar – may Allah be pleased with them all – after the battle of Hunayn. The Ansar, who fought alongside the Prophet ﷺ at Badr, who were killed at Badr, who were sur-

rounded at Khandaq and continued to stay with him, fighting and being killed until they eventually conquered Makkah, after which they headed for the battle of Hunayn.

It is reported in al-Bukhari and Muslim that the early part of the battle was intense. People left and dispersed, leaving the Prophet ﷺ exposed. The army of Ta'if was very strong. The Muslims were seemingly facing a defeat. The Prophet ﷺ turned to his companions only to see them running away from him. He then called out to the Ansar, "O Ansar!" They replied, "At your service, O Messenger of Allah!" and they returned to him and formed a line to protect him against the enemies' swords. They continued to sacrifice themselves for Allah's Messenger until the enemy fled and the Muslims were victorious. When the battle was over and the booty was amassed in front of the Prophet ﷺ, the Ansar began to look at it. Each of them was thinking about his hungry children and poor family, wishing that he may take a portion of the booty to comfort them with.

However, they noticed that the Prophet ﷺ called al-Aqra' bin Habis, who was a new Muslim that only just had embraced Islam in Makkah, and gave him a hundred camels. He then called Abu Sufyan and gave him a hundred camels, and continued to divide up the booty amongst the people of Makkah who had not sacrificed nearly as much as the Ansar had, nor fought like them.

When the Ansar saw this, some of them said to each other, "May Allah forgive His Messenger. He is giving the booty to Quraysh and neglecting us, while our swords are still dripping with their blood!"

When the leader of the Ansar, Sa'd bin 'Ubadah saw this, he

visited the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said, "O Messenger of Allah, your companions from the Ansar seem to have ill feelings towards you."

The Prophet ﷺ was surprised and said, "Why is that?"

Sa'd replied, "Due to the way you distributed the booty. You gave it to your people quite generously but didn't give the Ansar anything."

The Prophet ﷺ asked, "How do you feel about this, O Sa'd?"

He replied, "O Messenger of Allah, who am I except a person from my people?"

The Prophet ﷺ realised that the situation needed a solution by fixing people's hearts rather than their pockets. He said, "Gather your people together."

When they gathered, the Prophet ﷺ came to them. He began with Allaah's praise, then said, "O Ansar, what is this news that has reached me?"

They said, "As for our leaders, then they have not said anything, but some of the younger ones amongst us have said that may Allah forgive the Messenger of Allah who has given the booty to Quraysh and neglected us, while our swords are still drippling with their blood!"

The Prophet ﷺ replied, "O Ansar, were you not misguided and Allah guided you through me?"

They said, "Indeed, all thanks and praise belong to Allah and His Messenger."

He said, "Were you not poor and Allah made you self-sufficient? Were you not enemies of one another and Allah placed love between your hearts?"

They said, "Indeed, all thanks and praise belong to Allah and His Messenger."

The Prophet ﷺ then fell silent as did the people. They both waited in silence until the Prophet ﷺ said, "Will you not respond to me, O Ansaar?"

They said, "What can we say in response, O Messenger of Allah, for all thanks and praise belong to Allah and His Messenger."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "But by Allah, you might have answered and answered truthfully, for I myself would have testified to its truth myself you might have said, You came to us belied and rejected and we accepted you. You came to us as helpless and we helped you. You came to us a fugitive, and we took you in. You came to us poor and we comforted you."

The Prophet ﷺ then began to moving their hearts and emotions, saying, "O Ansar, do you feel concern for the things of this world, whereas I have sought to incline these people unto the faith in which you are already established?

Are you not satisfied, O Ansar, that the people will leave with ewes and camels while you will leave with the Messenger of Allah to your dwellings. By Him in Whose Hand is my life, had there been no migration, I would have been one of the Ansaar. If people were to go through a valley and passage while the Ansaar were to go through another valley and passage, I would go through the valley and passage of the Ansaar. O Allah! Have mercy on the

Ansaar, their children and their children's children."

The people, upon hearing this, began to cry until their beards were soaked and said, "Yes! We are satisfied, O Prophet of Allâh with our lot and share." Then the Prophet ﷺ left and the people dispersed.

How amazing was our Prophet ﷺ!

In fact, by using beautiful words, you can even intoxicate people.

It is said that once upon a time in Egypt there was a rich man known as Pasha who owned acres of farmland. He was also a very arrogant man who would often humiliate humble farmers. However, a time came when his farms were afflicted by something and so rendered useless. He thus became poor after having being rich and his children began to go hungry as he no longer had any source of income and had no skills other than farming.

He, therefore went out to look for any work he could find. He went to a farm which belonged to a weak person that he had once humiliated. He visited him and said in all humility, "Do you have any work I can do? Perhaps collect fruits, clean seeds, or prune trees?"

The farmer shouted, "You want to work for me, you arrogant man? Al-Hamdulillah, Allah responded to our prayers against you and humiliated you!" He then threw him off his land.

He went off, dragging his feet to another farm to see another farmer with whom he also had painful memories. This farmer also threw him out like the first one.

Pasha continued, determined not to go back home to his

children empty handed. He went to the third farmer to try his luck. When the farmer saw him, he became dazzled since he too had experienced humiliation at his hands.

The Pasha said, "I am looking for work since my children are hungry."

The farmer decided to humiliate him and to take revenge in a clever way. He said to him, "Welcome, dear Pasha! You have brightened up my farm! Who could be luckier than me today? The great Pasha enters my farm! The great Pasha! The honourable Pasha! "He began to intoxicate him with such expressions until Pasha was hypnotised.

The farmer then said, "Welcome! I have some work for you, although I do not know if it would be appropriate for you."

Pasha said, "What is it?"

He said, "Today I need to cultivate the land. I have a plough which is pulled by two bulls, one white and the other black. The black bull is ill today and therefore unable to work, while the white bull cannot pull the plough alone. I would like you to do the job for the black bull today, since you are very strong, dear Pasha! You are a leader! You are the one! You are always at the forefront!"

Pasha walked towards the plough with arrogance and pride and stood next to the white bull. The farmer came to him and began with the white bull by tying it with ropes to the plough. He then turned to Pasha and said, "You are the best Pasha in the world! You are strong! You are a hero!" He then tied Pasha up with a rope around his shoulders and climbed on top of the plough with a whip and began to shout, "Go!" He whipped the

bull making it and Pasha move forward. The farmer kept repeating, "Well done, dear Pasha! Excellent!" as he continued to whip the bull. Pasha had never done this before, but he continued to pull the plough with all his might from the morning until sunset, as if his mind was completely switched off.

When he finished, the farmer untied the rope around him and said, "By Allah! Your work was excellent today, dear Pasha! Today was the best day of my life!" He then gave him a few pounds and Pasha went home. He met his children whilst his shoulders had become worn out, blood was pouring out of his feet and his clothes were soaked with his sweat, but he was still intoxicated by the words.

His children asked him, "So, did you find any work?"

He said quite proudly, "Of course I did! I am Pasha, how can I not find work?"

They said, "So, what did you do then?"

He said, "What did I do? I..." It then dawned upon him what really had happened that day. He said, "…I worked as a bull today!"

Resolution...

Pick the best words to speak just as you would pick the best fruits to eat...

(81)

Help by your speech if you cannot do so in any other way

One of the most difficult circumstances in life is when a person in need comes to you only to return disappointed with his need unfulfilled.

Yes, fulfilling the needs of people is one of the greatest acts of worship, and proof enough for this are the Prophet's words, "For me to walk along with my brother to fulfil his need is more beloved to me than to make I'tikaf in this mosque of mine for a month." (al-Tabari, Hasan)

However, it is sometimes difficult to fulfil everyone's needs. Not everyone who asks for a loan can be helped. Not everyone who asks you to accompany him on a journey can be responded to positively. Not everyone who asks you, even for something as minor as a pen or a watch, can be helped.

The problem is that there are many people who, if you do not fulfil their request, may harbour ill feelings towards you. They may criticise you thereafter in public and accuse you of stinginess or selfishness. What should one then do?

Be an expert in getting yourself out of these situations wisely. If someone asks you for a favour which you cannot do, then at least refuse with kind words.

You neither have a horse to give nor wealth

Help with your speech, if you cannot help with anything else

If a person were to discover that you are planning to travel to a certain city, and he comes to you and says, "I would like you to buy something for me from the city you are travelling to" and yet, for one reason or another, you are not in a position to fulfil his need, how should you respond? Help him by your speech if you cannot do so in any other way.

Say to him, "By Allah, dear brother, I wish to serve you with all my heart, and you are more beloved to me than many others. However, I fear that my time will be restricted. I have a few things to do which would prevent me from fulfilling your request."

If he were to call you to wedding party and you wish to excuse yourself but fear that he may harbour ill feelings towards you if you decline, then you should say, "I consider you to be one of my own brothers. You are of the most precious people to me. However, I am particularly busy tonight."

You wouldn't have lied either, since you may be very busy with your children, or reading a book, or even sleeping! All these things keep us busy.

Our beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would captivate people's hearts with his noble manners. Imagine the Prophet ﷺ as he sat with his noble companions and spoke to them about the Holy Mosque in Makkah, the virtues of 'Umrah and entering the state of Ihram, as they listened while their hearts longed to be there. The Prophet ﷺ then ordered them to make preparations for the journey and race to get there. They did not take long

to prepare and get their weapons together for the journey. The Prophet ﷺ left with a thousand and four-hundred of his companions, as they said "Allahu Akbar" with the intention of 'Umrah as they raced to get to Makkah.

When they approached the mountains of Makkah, al-Qaswah – the Prophet's camel stopped and knelt down. He tried to make her stand again and continue with the journey but she refused. The people said, "Al-Qaswah has disobeyed!' The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Al-Qaswah hasn't disobeyed. It is not from her traits to disobey. However, she is being held up by what held up the Elephant (of Abrahah who came to destroy the Ka'bah)"

The Prophet ﷺ then said, "By the Name of Him in whose Hands my soul is, if they (i.e. the Quraysh) ask me anything which will respect the ordinances of Allah, I will grant it to them." He then struck the camel and she got up and continued.

He headed towards Makkah and stopped over a place called Al-Hudaybiyah which is close to Makkah. When the leaders of Quraysh heard about this, they went out to prevent him from entering Makkah. But the Prophet ﷺ insisted that he should enter Makkah to perform 'Umrah. The messengers between the Prophet and the Quraysh kept going back and forth until Suhayl bin 'Amr came and drew a pact with the Prophet ﷺ that he return to Madinah for now and return the following year for 'Umrah. They then wrote a general pact in which Suhayl stipulated that no weak Muslim would leave Makkah for Madinah except that he was to be returned, but as for the one who leaves Madinah for Makkah as an apostate, then he would be welcome in Makkah.

The Muslims said, "SubhanAllah! If a Muslim comes to us we return him to the pagans? How can we return him to the pagans when he has come to us having embraced Islam?"

While they were discussing, there came to them a young man in the heat of the desert and locked up in chains who shouted, "O Messenger of Allah!"

The people looked at him to discover that he was Abu Jandal, the son of Suhayl bin 'Amr, who had accepted Islam and was consequently tortured by his father. When he heard about the Muslims' arrival, he escaped from his imprisonment and came dragging his chains as his blood was pouring from his wounds and tears were pouring out of his eyes. He threw his exhausted body in front of the Prophet ﷺ as the Muslims watched.

When Suhayl saw this, he was furious at the thought of his escape from imprisonment! He then shouted at the top of his voice, "This man, O Muhammad, is the first person I demand that you send back to me!"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "We haven't finalised the pact, yet."

Suhayl said, "In that case, by Allah, I will not sign any pact with you!"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Then allow me to take him."

He said, "I will not allow you to take him."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Indeed, you will!"

He said, "No, I will not!"

The Prophet ﷺ then remained silent. He was very eager to bring Quraysh closer to Islam however much he could. He did

not wish that one Muslim's plight would have an adverse affect on the entire pact. Suhayl quickly got hold of his son and began to drag him along by his chains as Abu Jandal was shouting, begging the Muslims for help.

He said, "O Muslims! Am I going to be returned to the pagans after I have come to you as a Muslim?! Do you not see the ordeal I have undergone?" He continued to call for help until he eventually disappeared from their sight. The Muslims' hearts were filled with grief over him.

They saw a young man who was being tortured – the son of an elite figure who had left a life of ease for punishment and torture. They helplessly watched him dragged on the ground in chains in front of them to be returned to his prison.

Abu Jandal thus went back to Makkah, asking Allah to make him steadfast on his religion, to protect him, and to grant him further conviction in his beliefs.

The Muslims returned to Madinah with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, their hearts enraged by the disbelievers and at the same time pitiful for the weak and oppressed Muslims. Thereafter, the oppression against the Muslims increased to an extent that they were unable to bear it any longer.

Abu Jandal, his friend Abu Baseer and other oppressed Muslims decided to plan an escape for themselves. Abu Baseer managed to escape and instantly headed for Madinah, hoping to be in the company of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his Companions. He continued to walk in the heat of the desert until he finally reached Madinah and headed for the Mosque. As the Prophet ﷺ was sitting with his companions, there came to them Abu Baseer

upon whom the affects of torture were quite visible. He looked exhausted from his journey. He had not even managed regain his breath when two men from the disbelievers of Quraysh arrived and entered the Mosque. When Abu Baseer saw them, he became terrified and began recalling the torture he had undergone.

The two men entered shouting, "O Muhammad! Return him to us according to the pact you signed with us!"

The Prophet ﷺ remembered the pact he had signed with the Quraysh where he had agreed to return to them whoever comes to him from Makkah. He ordered Abu Baseer to leave Madinah, and so he did with the two disbelievers. When they exited Madinah, they sat down to eat. One of them sat with Abu Baseer while the other disappeared to relieve himself.

The one sitting next to Abu Baseer took his sword out and began to play with it. He said to Abu Baseer jokingly, "I will strike with this sword al-Aws and al-Khazraj all day long!"

Abu Baseer said to him, "By Allah, I see your sword is excellent!"

He said, "Yes, by Allah! This sword is fine, I have used it over and over!"

Abu Baseer said, "Allow me to have a look, please."

The man gave him the sword. As soon as he got hold of it, he raised the sword and struck his neck with it, causing his head to fly off. When the man's companion came back and saw the body of his friend cut up, he was terrified and rushed to Madinah to the Prophet ﷺ in his Mosque.

When the Prophet ﷺ saw him terrified, he said, "He must

have seen something awful."

He stood in front of the Prophet ﷺ and screamed, "By Allah, my friend has been killed and I am going to be killed, too!" It wasn't long before Abu Baseer entered the Mosque, looking sinister with a blood-stained sword in his hand.

He said, "O Prophet of Allah! Allah has fulfilled your trust. You did return me to them, but Allah has saved me. Please, accept me!"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "No."

Abu Baseer then said in a loud voice, "OK then, give me a man and I will conquer Makkah for you!"

The Prophet ﷺ was amazed at his valour. However, he was not able to fulfil his request as there was the pact between him and the people of Makkah. However, the Prophet ﷺ still wanted to respond to him in kindness and to help him by his speech if he could not do so in any other way.

He turned to his Companions and said in praise of Abu Baseer, "Woe be to his mother! He is a warrior, if only he had men!'

These words also constituted a type of consent that he gave to Abu Baseer.

Abu Baseer stayed at the door of the Mosque waiting for the Prophet ﷺ to grant him permission to stay in Madinah. However, he recalled his pledge with the Quraysh and ordered him to leave Madinah. Abu Baseer heard and obeyed.

Yes, he did not hold any grudge in his heart against the religion, and nor did he turn to the Muslims in enmity. He was hoping for a reward from the Most Generous, for whom he had left

his family and had exhausted himself and placed his body under great stress.

Abu Baseer left Madinah and wondered where he should go. In Makkah there would await him torture and chains, and in Madinah there are pacts and pledges that the Muslims had to uphold. He thus went off to the shores of the Red Sea and stayed over there without a friend or companion.

When the Muslims in Makkah heard about him, they realised that the doors to relief were opened up to them as the Muslims in Madinah were not able to accept them and the disbelievers in Makkah were torturing them.

Abu Jandal then managed to escape and caught up with Abu Baseer. Thereafter, many Muslims began to join up with him until they became great in number and powerful. Not a single Qurayshi caravan would pass them except that they would attack it.

When the Quraysh became fed up of this, they sent a message to the Prophet ﷺ urging him in the name of Allah to allow Abu Baseer to join the Muslims in Madinah. Thus, the Prophet ﷺ sent them a message ordering them to join him in Madinah. When the message reached them they were overjoyed. However, Abu Baseer by then had become critically ill and was close to death. He kept saying, "My Lord, most High – the Greatest! Whoever aids Allah is aided!"

When people visited him and informed him that the Prophet ﷺ had allowed them to go and live in Madinah, that their estrangement had finally ended and that they had been given security, Abu Baseer became overjoyed. He said as he was fighting death, "Show me the letter from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ." The

letter was thus given to him.

He took the letter, kissed it, placed it upon his chest and said, "I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah! I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah!" He then breathed his last breath and passed away.

May Allah have mercy on you, O Abu Baseer! May Allah's prayers be upon you, O Prophet!

To help someone with enchanting words indicates that you consider his feelings and show him kindness.

It is said that once, a poor woman laid next to her husband on an old bed in an old cottage. Its walls were patchy and the roof was made from the trunks of palm-trees. Her eyes started to wander about as she looked at the walls and the roof and she drifted away, deep in thought. She then said, "Do you know what I wish?"

The man said, "What do you wish?"

She said, "I wish that one day you own a huge house wherein you would live with your children happily and to which you could call your friends over. I also wish that we own a nice car which you would drive comfortably, and that your income multiplies so that you could pay off all your debts, etc." She continued to eagerly mention all the different types of happiness that she wished for him. The man was, however, sunk in his thoughts about his failures. He had lost all hope of bettering his situation, and he was not very skilful in speech either.

When the woman became tired of speaking, she said to him, "What do you wish for?"

The man looked at the roof for a while and said, "I wish that a part of the trunk falls off from this roof onto your head and splits it into two!"

A Hadith...

The Prophet ﷺ was asked, "What are the most common reasons for which people enter Hell?" He replied, "This and this." Meaning, the private parts and the tongue.

(82)

Supplications

I do not intend to discuss here the virtues of supplication and the manners and conditions for them to be answered, for none of this is directly related to our main discussion here, which is the art of dealing with others.

What I wish to address here is how you can skilfully win people over via your supplications.

The first step is to supplicate to Allah that he guides you to the best of manners and character. The Prophet ﷺ used to say in his supplications, "O Allah, to you belongs all praise! There is no one worthy of worship but you. Glory be to you with your praise. I have wronged myself and acknowledged my sins, so please forgive my sins, for none forgives the sins except You. Guide me to the best of manners, for none guides one to them except You. Avert bad manners from me, for none averts bad manners except You. We are at Your service and all good is in Your Hand." (Abu 'Awana with this wording, Sahih)

To return to the topic, how can you win over people by your supplications?

People generally tend to like others supplicating for them. They delight when you greet them upon meeting them and

then supplicate for them. So when you say, "How are you doing? What's the latest?" You should also say, "May Allah keep you safe. May He bless you. May He keep your heart firm."

Try not to use overused supplications, like, "May Allah grant you success, may He protect you." Because although these are also good supplications, the people are all too used it them. When you meet anyone with children, you should pray for them saying, "May Allah make them the source of your delight. May He keep you all together. May Allah make them all obedient", and so on.

I say this from experience, for I have done this many times and noticed how quickly it captures people's hearts. A couple of years ago, on one of the nights of Ramadan, I was called for a live show on a Satellite Television channel. The show was about worshiping during the month of Ramadan. It was held in Makkah in a hotel room overlooking the Haram. We were discussing Ramadan as the viewers were watching the people performing 'Umrah live through the window behind us. It was a majestic scene, so much so that even the presenter was moved and wept during the show.

The atmosphere was spiritually invigorating and nothing spoiled it for us except the cameraman. He was holding the camera in one hand and a cigarette in the other, as if he did not want to miss inhaling smoke on a single night of Ramadan! This bothered me greatly since the smoke was choking me. However, I had no option except to have patience as the show was live. A whole hour passed by and the show finally ended without any trouble.

The cameraman came to me holding a cigarette and thanked and praised me. I shook his hand and said, "I would also like to thank you for participating in recording a religious programme. However, I do have something to say to you, I hope you would accept it."

"Please, do!" he said.

I said, "The smoke and cigare..."

"Please do not advise me. By Allah, it will be of no use!" he said, interrupting me.

I said, "Ok, then at least hear me out. You know that cigarettes are Haram and Allah says..."

"Dear Shaykh, please do not waste your time. I have been smoking for more than forty years! The tar is in my blood and veins. There is no use in advising me!" he said, interrupting me once again.

I said, "No use at all?"

He became slightly embarrassed and said, "Please pray for me."

I held his hand and said, "Come with me."

'To where?' he asked.

"Come with me and let's look at the Ka'bah" I said.

I stood at the window overlooking the Haram and noticed that every part of the Haram was packed with people bowing, prostrating, performing 'Umrah and crying. It was a very moving sight.

I asked, "Do you see these people?"

"Yes", he said.

I said, "They have come from all over the world: white, black, Arabs, non-Arabs, rich and poor. All of them are praying to Allah that he accepts their efforts and forgives their sins. Do you not wish that Allah grants you what He grants them?'

"I do, indeed", he said.

I said, "Raise your hands and I will pray for you. Just say Amen to my supplications."

I raised my hands and supplicated, "O Allah, forgive him!" He said, "Amen."

I said, "O Allah, raise his rank and unite him with his beloved ones in Paradise. O Allah..."

I continued to supplicate for him until his heart softened and he cried as he kept repeating "Amen... Amen..."

When I decided to conclude the supplication, I said, "O Allah, if he stops smoking, then accept this supplication. If he doesn't stop smoking, then don't."

Upon hearing this, the man exploded in tears, covered his face with his hands, and left the room.

After many months had passed, I was invited by the same satellite television channel for another live show. When I entered the building, I saw a chubby man who came up to me and greeted me very warmly. He kissed my forehead and then kissed my hand.

I said to him, "How kind of you! I really do appreciate the love and respect you have shown to me, but forgive me as I do

not remember you."

He said, "Do you remember the cameraman you advised a couple of years ago to quit smoking?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "I am he! By Allah, dear Shaykh, I have not placed a cigarette in my mouth ever since!"

Whenever I recall my memories, I always think about this incident.

Three years ago during a Hajj season, I went to a Hajj group to deliver a lecture after the 'Asr prayer. After the lecture, people came to greet me and ask me various questions. I wanted to finish with them quickly so that I could go to deliver another lecture with another group. Meanwhile, I noticed that there was a young man who was hesitantly moving towards me. Perhaps he felt uncomfortable in the crowd. I turned to him and stretched out my hand towards him to shake his hand. I then asked him while he was still in the middle of the crowd, "Do you have a question?"

He said, "Yes."

I pulled him to myself until he came close.

"What's your question?" I asked.

He said in hurry, "I went to do the ritual stoning along with my grandmother and sister. There were lots of crowds..." He asked the question and I answered.

Meanwhile, I noticed the smell of cigarettes on him, so I smiled and asked, "Do you smoke?"

"Yes", he said.

I said, "I ask Allah to forgive you, accept your Hajj, and help you quit smoking straight way."

The young man remained silent, and it was quite clear that he was affected what I had said.

After eight months, I went to deliver a lecture in a city. I entered the mosque to notice an honourable young man waiting for me at the door. I was amazed because as soon as he had seen me, he came and greeted me very warmly, even though I didn't remember him. I exchanged greetings with him anyway.

He said, "Do you recognise me?"

I said, "I thank you very much for your kindness, love and respect, but I am afraid that I don't recognise you."

He said, "Do you remember the young man you met during Hajj who was a smoker? You advised him to quit smoking…"

I said, "O yes, I do!"

He said, "I am that person! I would like to give you the good news that I have not placed a cigarette in my mouth since. I have quit smoking and have also rectified myself in other ways to a great extent."

I warmly shook his hand and became convinced that supplicating a person in front of him, as he listens, is perhaps more effective than advising him directly.

Similarly, if you were to see for example a young man being dutiful to his parents, you should say, "May Allah reward you. May He grant you success. May He make your children as dutiful."

There is no doubt that this prayer would be an encouragement for him to continue.

The Prophet ﷺ was very novel in using such prayers to guide and win over people in order to bring them closer to the religion. At-Tufayl bin 'Amr was one of the leaders of the tribe Daws. One day he came to Makkah for a need. When he entered the city, the noble men of the Quraysh noticed his presence. They approached him and said, "Who are you?"

He said, "At-Tufayl bin 'Amr, the leader of Daws."

Quraysh feared that at-Tufayl might meet the Prophet ﷺ and accept Islam. They said, "There is a man here in Makkah who claims that he is a prophet. Beware! Do not sit with him or listen to what he has to say, for he is a magician. If you were to listen to him, you would lose your mind."

At-Tufayl said, "They continued to warn me about him until I was determined neither to listen to anything from him nor to speak to him. In fact, I stuffed cotton in my ears in the fear that I would end up overhearing some of his speech as I passed by him."

At-Tufayl said, "I went to the Mosque to find the Messenger of Allah ﷺ standing in prayer next to the Ka'bah. I stood closer to him and Allah was insistent on making me hear some of his speech. I really liked what I heard and said to myself, "May my mother lose me! By Allah, I am an intelligent person. I am well able to distinguish between the good and bad. What is then preventing me from listening to what this man has to say? If he says something good, I will accept it. If he says something bad, I will reject it. I stayed until he finished his prayer. When he rose to

leave for his house, I followed him until he entered his house and I entered with him.

I said, 'O Muhammad, your people have told me such and such. By Allah, they continued to warn me about you until I stuffed my ears with cotton so that I would not get to hear your words. I then managed to hear some of the good you have to say anyway, so please, present to me more of what you have to say.'"

The Prophet ﷺ became overjoyed, presented Islam to at-Tufayl and recited some Qur'anic verses. At-Tufayl contemplated on his life and realised that with every passing day, he was becoming further away from Allah by worshipping stones, stones which neither responded to his prayers nor his calls. This much had become clear to him. At-Tufayl then began to think about the aftermath of his acceptance of Islam: How could he leave his religion and that of his forefathers? What would the people say? What about the life he used to live? The wealth he gathered? His family? His son? His neighbours? His friends? There would be chaos!

At-Tufayl remained silent as he thought about it, weighing up between his worldly life and the Hereafter. He decided at once to let go of the worldly life and remain steadfast on the religion, regardless of who would be pleased or displeased, for who cares about the people of this world if the One in the heavens is pleased? Why should he care about his provision when it was in the Hands of the One above the heavens? His health was in the Hands of the One above the heavens. His honour and status were in the Hands of the One above the heavens. In fact, even his life and death were in the Hands of the One above the heavens!

Hence, if the inhabitants of the heavens were pleased with him, then what he lost of this world should not have worried him. If Allah loved him then it did not matter who was angry with him. Therefore, let whoever wished to mock or censure him do so!

Yes, at-Tufayl accepted Islam there and then and bore witness to Allah's oneness. He then demonstrated his lofty ambitions and said to the Prophet ﷺ, "O Prophet of Allah, I am obeyed among my people. I will return to them and call them to Islam."

At-Tufayl then left Makkah and hurried back to his people, riding over mountains and through valleys until he finally reached his people. When he entered the city, his father approached him. His father was an old man very close to his death and still worshipping idols. At-Tufayl wanted to call him to Islam with firm resolution.

Al-Tufayl said to him, "Listen to me, dear father. I have nothing to do with you and you have nothing to do with me!"

His father was stunned and said, "Why so, dear son?"

He replied, "I have accepted Islam and decided to follow Muhammad ﷺ."

The father replied, "Dear son, your religion is my religion!"

He said, "In that case, go and take a bath and purify yourself. Then come to me and I will teach you what I have been taught."

His father then went away, took a bath, purified himself, and then returned to at-Tufayl and accepted Islam.

At-Tufayl then went to his house where his wife welcomed him in.

He said to her, "Listen to me! I have nothing to do with you and you have nothing to do with me!"

She said, "Why so?"

He replied, "Islam has separated the two of us. I have decided to follow the religion of Muhammad ﷺ."

She said, "In that case, your religion is my religion."

He said, 'Then go and purify yourself and return to me."

She turned around to do as she was told, but then thought about the idol she worshipped. What if the idol was to harm her children if she forsook it? She returned to him and said, "Don't you fear for the children from Dhu ash-Sharah?"

Dhu ash-Sharah was the idol they would worship. They used to believe that this idol would harm whoever forsakes the worship of it, or his children.

He said, "Go and do what I said, for I guarantee that Dhu ash-Shara won't be able to harm them."

She went away, took a bath, returned and accepted Islam. At-Tufayl then began to visit all the houses, calling people to Islam. He would go to their gatherings and speak to them on the pathways, but they refused to forsake the worshipping of idols. At-Tufayl became angry and left for Makkah to inform the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He said, "O Messenger of Allah, Daws have disobeyed and refused to accept Islam. O Messenger of Allah, supplicate to Allah against them!"

The Prophet's facial complexion changed and he raised his hands to supplicate. At-Tufayl saw this and thought to himself that Daws would now be destroyed, yet, the Prophet of mercy

said instead, "O Allah, guide Daws! O Allah, guide Daws!" He then turned to at-Tufayl and said, "Go back to your people and call them to Islam with gentleness." He returned to them and continued to call them to Islam until they finally accepted.

How beautiful it is to knock on heaven's doors, not only for at-Tufayl and his people but many others besides them.

The Muslims at the beginning of the Islamic call were very few, perhaps, not more than thirty-eight men. One day, Abu Bakr suggested that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ proclaim his message openly to the people and declare openly his Islam.

The Prophet ﷺ replied, "O Abu Bakr, we are few in number."

Abu Bakr was very eager, so he persisted until they decided to do as he had suggested. They went out with the Prophet ﷺ leading them and headed for the Grand Mosque. There they dispersed, every one of them addressing his own people. Abu Bakr stood up and began to address his people, call them to Islam, and attack their idols. The pagans rose against the Muslims and began to beat them all over the mosque. As the pagans were many in number, the Muslims dispersed. Meanwhile, a group of pagans ganged up against Abu Bakr and beat him until he fell to the ground.

Thereupon, the evil 'Utbah bin Rabi'ah came closer to Abu Bakr and began to strike him with his sandals and rub them against his face. He then stood on top of Abu Bakr's stomach while blood was pouring from his face. The flesh on his face became apparent and his mouth had became indistinguishable from his nose.

Meanwhile, men from Abu Taym, who were the tribe of Abu Bakr, arrived on the scene and pushed people away from Abu Bakr. They then carried him on a sheet of cloth and took him home. They thought he had passed away. Banu Taym then returned to the mosque and began to shout, "By Allah, If Abu Bakr dies, we will surely kill 'Utbah bin Rabi'ah!"

They then returned to Abu Bakr who was unconscious, not knowing whether he was dead or alive. Abu Quhafah, Abu Bakr's father, stood next to Abu Bakr along with his family, trying to speak to him, but he wouldn't respond. His mother was also standing next to him weeping. After a long while, he opened up his eyes, and the first thing he said was, "What happened to the Messenger of Allah?"

May Allah have mercy on Abu Bakr! He was full of love for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, such that he feared for him more than he feared for his own life. All those around him, including his father, mother and his people, who were all pagans, became angry and began to curse the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. They then left and told the mother of Abu Bakr to give him something to eat or drink.

His mother began to console him as he kept repeating, "What happened to the Messenger of Allah?"

She said, "By Allah, I don't know what happened to your friend."

He said, "Please, go to Umm Jameel bint al-Khattab and ask her about him."

Umm Jameel was a Muslim who would conceal her Islam. His mother visited Umm Jameel and asked, "Abu Bakr is asking about

Muhammad bin ‘Abdullah. Do you have any news?”

She said, “I neither know Abu Bakr nor Muhammad bin ‘Abdullah, but do you want me to go with you to your son?”

‘Yes”, she replied.

She went with her until they approached Abu Bakr. She found him lying on his bed with his face disfigured and his body fatigued. When Umm Jameel saw him, she screamed, “Did the people do this to you only to defend the people of wickedness and disbelief? I really hope Allah exacts revenge from them!”

Abu Bakr then turned to her with his drained eyes, fatigued body, disfigured face, and a heart full of love for this religion, and said, “What happened to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ?”

Umm Abu Bakr was standing next to her and Umm Jameel feared that she might be exposed for her Islam and thereafter abused.

She said, “O Abu Bakr, your mother is here and listening.”

He said, “Don’t worry about her.”

She said, “OK, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is safe and sound.”

He said, “Where is he?”

She said, “In the house of Abu al-Arqam.”

His mother then said, “Now you know about your friend, so get up and eat or drink something.”

Abu Bakr replied, “I vow to Allah that I will not taste any food or drink until I see the Messenger of Allah ﷺ with my own eyes.”

They waited until the people had calmed down, then left with Abu Bakr as he dragged his feet along the ground, to the house of Abu al-Arqam. Abu Bakr entered with a wounded and bloody face and his clothes torn apart. When the Prophet ﷺ saw him in this state, he leapt up to him to kiss him, as did the rest of the Muslims.

The Prophet ﷺ felt extreme pity for him, such that it was very apparent on his face. Abu Bakr decided to downplay his injuries and said, "May my mother and father be sacrificed for you, O Messenger of Allah. I am fine, apart from the blows I received on my face from that wicked man."

Abu Bakr was a hero who had great concern for the Islamic call. He would utilise whatever opportunities were available to him, no matter what state he was in and despite being wounded and thirsty. He thus said, "O Messenger of Allah! This is my mother who is kind to her parents. You are, indeed, blessed. Please pray to Allah for her that He saves her from Hell."

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ prayed to Allah for her guidance and then asked her to embrace Islam. She responded by becoming a Muslim on the spot. Supplications were, therefore, one of the ways in which the Muslims would deal with each other.

Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, had become a Muslim but his mother remained a disbeliever. He would invite her to accept Islam but she would refuse. One day, he asked her to embrace Islam but she insulted the Prophet ﷺ in response. Abu Hurayrah felt terrible thereafter and went to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ weeping. He said, "O Messenger of Allah, I always ask my mother to embrace Islam and she refuses. Today I asked her

to embrace Islam and in return she said a few words about you that I despised hearing. Please, supplicate to Allah that He guides the mother of Abu Hurayrah to Islam."

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ supplicated for her. When Abu Hurayrah returned to his mother and approached the door, he found it closed. As he tried to open the door, his mother opened it for him and said, "I bear witness that there is no One worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger."

Abu Hurayrah returned to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ as he wept for joy and said, "Good news, O Messenger of Allah! Allah has responded to your supplication and guided the mother of Abu Hurayrah to Islam!"

Abu Hurayrah then said, "O Messenger of Allah, ask Allah to make my mother and I beloved to His believing servants, and make them beloved to us."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "O Allah, make him and his mother beloved to your believing servants, and make them beloved to the two."

Abu Hurayrah said, "From then on, there was no believing man or woman except that he loved me and I loved him." (Muslim)

Enlightenment…

"Your Lord has said, "Call me, and I will answer you…""

(83)

Patching up

Often, when we attempt to apply certain skills with others, we realise our failure in determining the best tactics to deploy. For instance, a person sees a cheerful young man and attempts to use the 'Be cheerful' tactic with him and says, "MashaAllah! How beautiful are the clothes you are wearing! Just look at that splendour and the cheerful face!"

Then, instead of saying, "How happy your wife must be with you!" he says, "I wish you were a girl so that I could marry you!" This would be a very inappropriate joke indeed!

One of my colleagues related to me the following:

"At university, I had a sluggish student, yet Allah had given him a cheerful face. He would always sit at the end of the lecture theatre and drift far away in his thoughts. I would always request that he sit at the front to follow the lecture better, but he would always forget. I did not want to embarrass him or others as they were senior university students.

One day, I entered the lecture theatre to find him sitting at the end of the hall as usual. When I sat down on my chair, I said to him, "Abd al-Muhsin, please, come to the front.'

He said, 'I feel fine where I am and I can follow the lesson

comfortably.'

I said, 'Dear brother, please sit a little closer and let us see your rosy cheeks!' Thereupon some of the students turned around to look at him and he turned bright red.

I realised that I had made a mistake, so in order to patch it up I said, 'The girl who marries you will be delighted! But as for these boys, they would have a hard time finding a bride!' I then began the lecture instantly without leaving a moment for anyone to think about it further. The student also smiled and moved over to the front row."

Therefore, even though these sorts of mistakes do happen, they are very easy to overcome.

Sometimes, you may embarrass or upset someone, not mistakenly, but because this is what the situation may demand. For instance, if two of your friends quarrel and you think that one of them is correct, you will support him and may even criticise the other one. This may even happen between your children, students or neighbours. What then should you do? Should we allow these situations to cause us to lose our friends, one after another, when we always endeavour to do our best to gain people's hearts and make friends?

Certainly not! So what should we do?

The answer is that if you ever find that someone has become upset with you over some words you had uttered, or was saddened by something you did, then you should instantly try to heal the wound before it inflames, by using the appropriate skill.

How can you do this? Take this for an example:

Makkah, before the Muslims had conquered it, was under the control of the pagans. The pagans had made life difficult for the weak Muslims therein and were oppressing the children of those who had migrated to Madinah but had not been able to take their offspring with them. The Muslims were living through very difficult times. The Prophet ﷺ wanted to enter Makkah to perform 'Umrah but the Quraysh turned him away, and what happened then at Hudaybiyah is history. The Prophet ﷺ signed a pact with the Quraysh wherein he agreed to return to Madinah without performing 'Umrah, and to return the following year to perform it.

After a year, the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions entered Makkah in the state of Ihram, saying, "Labbayk". They performed 'Umrah and the Prophet ﷺ stayed in Makkah for four days. When he headed back to Madinah, a small girl followed him. She was the daughter of Hamzah, who had been martyred at the battle of Uhud. She had remained in Makkah as an orphan.

The small girl began to call the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saying, "Dear uncle! Dear uncle!" 'Ali – may Allah be pleased with him – was riding next to the Prophet ﷺ along with his pious wife, Fatimah – may Allah be pleased with her – the daughter of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. 'Ali lifted her up, gave her to Fatimah, and said, "Hold on to your cousin."

When Zayd saw this, he recalled that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had created the bond of brotherhood between him and Hamzah upon their migration to Madinah. Zayd therefore came over and said, "She is my niece, and I am more deserving of her custody."

Ja'far then came over and said, "She is my cousin and her maternal aunt is my wife (i.e. Asma' bint 'Umays) and therefore I have more right to her custody."

'Ali said, "I took her first and she is my cousin."

When the Prophet ﷺ found out about their disagreement, he decreed that she should go to her maternal aunt, gave her custody to Ja'far and said, "The maternal aunt is closest to the mother."

The Prophet ﷺ then feared that 'Ali and Zayd may have ill feelings towards him due to his decree. Thus, he decided to cheer up 'Ali and said, "You are from me, and I am from you." He said to Zayd, "You are our brother and confederate." He said to Ja'far, "You resemble my physical appearance and character."

Notice how much of an expert the Prophet ﷺ was in cleansing people's hearts from malice and winning them over.

If we were now to return to the story of our friend who said, "I wish you were a girl so that I could marry you!" How could the damage be repaired?

There are several doors he can escape via. He can change the topic instantly in order not to give any opportunity to the person to think about what he has said. For instance, he could say, "May Allah give you the maidens of Paradise who are even more beautiful than yourself! Don't forget to say Amen!"

He could also throw in a whole new topic, such as asking him about a brother who has just travelled, or his new car, and so on, just so that there is no opportunity left for anyone to feel embarrassed.

Experience...

It is not a disgrace for one to err, but it is for one to persist upon the error.

(84)

Look with both eyes

We tend to be experts at noticing other people's faults and commenting on them. But we rarely tend to be experts on noticing the good they have and the right things they do in order to comment positively.

Take, for example, a teacher with his students. All teachers tend to criticise the lazy student who does not do his work and is always late to his lessons. However, not many teachers comment positively about the student who is hardworking, punctual, and has good handwriting.

We often criticise the faults in our children but praise them little when they do good. This makes us lose many opportunities through which we can win over hearts.

Therefore, from the most important of all skills is to praise the good that people may have. The people of Abu Musa al-Ash'ari – may Allah be pleased with him – had great interest in reciting and memorising the Qur'an. Perhaps, they surpassed many other Companions in reciting the Qur'an with a melodious voice. Once, they accompanied the Prophet ﷺ on a journey. When the people woke up one morning and gathered, the Prophet ﷺ said, "I can recognise the voices of our Ash'ari companions as they

recite the Qur'an at night. I also know their locations just by listening to their recitation at night, without ever needing to see where their places are when they stop over in the morning." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

If you were to have been with the Ash'aris and had heard the Prophet ﷺ praising them in front of others, you would realise how it would make them even more enthusiastic.

One morning, the Prophet ﷺ met Abu Musa and said to him, "You should have seen me last night as I attentively listened to your recitation. You have been given one of the flutes of the people of David."

Abu Musa became overjoyed and delighted upon hearing this. He said, "If I had known that you were listening to my recitation, I would have recited even more proficiently." (al-Hakim, Sahih. Its origin is in al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Yes, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ never used to hide his feelings. Rather, he would share them with his family. Just as he would tell the wrongdoer that he had erred, he would also tell the doer of good that he had done good!

'Amr bin Taghlib – may Allah be pleased with him – was a man from amongst the Companions. He was not as distinguished in terms of knowledge as Abu Bakr, nor in terms of bravery as 'Umar, nor in terms of memory as Abu Hurayrah. However, his heart was filled with faith, and this was something the Prophet ﷺ was well aware of. One day as the Prophet ﷺ was seated, there came to him some wealth which he began to distribute amongst the people. The Prophet ﷺ had a special way of distributing charity, war booty, or gifts amongst the people. He would

never arbitrarily give to people. Rather, following his own policy, he would give to some and not to others. However, some of those to whom the Prophet ﷺ did not give harboured ill feelings as a result and questioned why they got nothing.

When the Prophet ﷺ found out about this, he decided to rid their hearts of this ill feeling before it got worse. Thus, he stood amongst the people, thanked and praised Allah, and then said, "To proceed, by Allah, I give to some people and leave others out. The one I leave out is more beloved to me than the one to whom I give. I give to some people because of the impatience and discontent present in their hearts. I leave others because of the contentment and goodness Allah has bestowed upon them, and one such person of them is 'Amr bin Taghlib."

When 'Amr bin Taghlib heard his praise in the midst of the people, he was overjoyed. He would always relate this hadeeth thereafter and say, "The sentence which Allah's Apostle said in my praise is dearer to me than the possession of the finest red camels." (al-Bukhari)

One day, Abu Hurayrah came forward and asked the Prophet ﷺ, "Who is the most felicitous person to obtain your intercession on the Day of Resurrection?"

It was, indeed, a good question. Surely much better than the question posed by another person who had asked, "When is the hour?"

The Prophet ﷺ said in order to encourage Abu Hurayrah, "I knew for sure that nobody would precede you in asking such a question due to the determination I have observed in you to obtaining knowledge. The most felicitous person to obtain my

intercession on the Day of Resurrection is he who has said, 'There is no one worthy of worship except Allah', sincerely from his heart."

Salman the Persian was one of the best Companions, though he was not an Arab. He was the son of noble Persian whose father used to love him intensely and keep him very close to himself, so much so that he would often lock him up in the house out of fear for what may happen to him.

Allah entered faith into the heart of Salman – may Allah be pleased with him. He left his father's house and travelled to Syria in search of the truth. A person tricked him and sold him to a Jew, pretending that he was a slave. After many other events, he finally reached the Prophet ﷺ.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ appreciated him greatly. One day, as he ﷺ was sitting amongst his Companions, Surat al-Jumu'ah was revealed to him. The Prophet ﷺ began to recite it to his Companions, as they listened attentively. He recited, "He it is Who sent among the unlettered ones a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His Verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the wisdom. And verily, they had been before in manifest error."

When he recited, "And others from among them who have not yet joined them. And He is the Mighty, the Wise", a man from amongst the Companions said, "Who are those people, O Messenger of Allah?" He ﷺ did not respond.

He asked again, "Who are those people, O Messenger of Allah?"

The Prophet ﷺ turned to Salman, placed his hand on him, and said, "Even if faith were near the Pleiades, a man from amongst them (i.e., the Persians) would surely find it." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

A point of view...

Be optimistic and have good opinion of people. Encourage them so they give more.

(85)

The art of listening

The skills of attracting people and winning their hearts are many. Some involve doing certain actions while others involve avoiding certain actions. Being cheerful attracts people, as does not frowning. Beautiful words, interesting comments and jokes attract people, as does listening attentively to others and reacting to their words.

How about if we now discuss the 'calm attraction' effect?

Yes, some people do not tend to speak much. You never get to hear their voice in gatherings and congregations. In fact, if you notice them in a sitting, you will see that they only move their head or eyes. They may move their mouth from time to time, but only when smiling, without saying a word! Despite this, people love them and long to sit in their company.

Why is this? It is because they exercise what is called the 'calm attraction' effect.

The art of listening has a various set of skills. In fact, someone interested in this subject once informed me that he has attended more than fifteen training sessions on this subject alone!

Compare three people: You speak to the first about an incident that occurred to you, and as you begin, he interrupts you

and says, "Yes, something very similar also happened with me!"

You say to him, "OK, but please let me finish my story."

He remains silent for a while and just as you get to the heart of the story, he interrupts again, saying, "Correct! Correct! This is exactly what happened to me. Once I went to..."

You say to him again, "Please, brother, wait..."

He then falls silent, but when patience becomes unbearable for him, he interrupts again and says, "Please, hurry up!"

As for the second person, as you speak to him, he looks to his right and left. He may even take his mobile phone out of his pocket and write text messages as you speak, or who knows, he might even be playing games on it!

The third person knows how to listen attentively. You notice that as you speak, he fixes his gazes on you. You realise that he is carefully following your words. Sometimes he shakes his head in agreement, sometimes he smiles and sometimes he presses his lips out of surprise. Sometimes, he might say, "Amazing! SubhanAllah!"

Which of the three aforementioned people would you long to be in the company of and happily visit? No doubt the third!

Therefore, capturing people's hearts is not only accomplished by letting them hear what they would like to hear, but by also listening to what they would like us to hear.

I recall that a prominent preacher who had been blessed with sound intellect and eloquence would frequently deliver lectures and sermons. Whether it was a Friday sermon, a Fatwa session, or a university lecture, he would continuously be speaking. Peo-

ple would watch him on satellite television channels and always look forward to listening to his words. Except, that is, for his wife. Whenever he was with his wife, instead of listening to her story, he would be continuously speaking non-stop, as usual.

She would often complain about him but he wouldn't know why she would do so. Everyone would respect and praise him except for her. So, one day, he decided to take her with him to one of his lectures to appreciate what she had not heard before.

He said to her, "Would you like to come with me?"

She said, "To where?"

He said, "To a lecture by a preacher. Perhaps we will benefit from it."

She got into the car with him. When they arrived at their destination, they got out of the car and walked until they reached the door of the mosque. A huge crowd had turned up to listen to this excellent lecturer. She went into the women's section whilst he walked through the crowd, sat on the chair and began his lecture. The people were listening to the lecture attentively, and even his wife was probably amazed at his performance. When the lectured finished, he went out to his car, pleased with his performance. His wife came and sat in the passenger seat, and as they sat in the car, he gave her no opportunity to speak, as usual, and began to talk about the crowds, the beauty of the mosque, etc.

He then asked her, "What do you think of today's lecture?"

She said, "It was good and very effective. Who was the lec-

turer?'"

He said, "Strange! You didn't recognise the voice?"

She said, "Well, with all the crowd and the poor loudspeakers, I couldn't pay much attention."

He said, with all pride, "I was the lecturer!"

She said, "Ah! I was thinking to myself all through the talk when will he ever stop!"

Therefore, to listen attentively to others is a skill in and of itself. Some people forget that Allah has only given them one tongue while he has given them two ears - so that they may hear more than they speak. Some people, if given the choice to balance their speaking and hearing, would opt for having two ears and two tongues, due to their obsession with speaking!

Train yourself to listen to others attentively. If you do have criticisms to make, then do not be hasty in making them.

During the early days of Islam, the Muslims were few in number. The disbelievers would reject the Prophet ﷺ and discourage people from listening to him. They would spread rumours about him that he was a soothsayer, a liar, a madman, or even a magician. One day, a man called Dhuman came to Makkah. He was a wise man with knowledge of medicine who would also treat people with mental illness or problems with magic.

When he began to mix with the people of Makkah, he heard some of the ignorants saying, "Then the madman came... We then saw the madman..."

Dhumad said, "Where is this man? Perhaps Allah will cure him by my hands."

The people directed him to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. When he saw the Prophet ﷺ and reflected upon his face, he found it to be bright. Dhumad nevertheless told the Prophet ﷺ the reason why he had come, "O Muhammad, I am an expert on incantations. Allah cures whoever He wills by my hands. Come to me and I will treat you."

The man began to speak about his treatments expertise as the Prophet ﷺ listened attentively. What was he listening to so attentively? He was listening to the words of a disbeliever who had come to treat his 'mental illness'!

And how wise he was!

When Dhumad finished what he had to say, the Prophet ﷺ said very calmly, "All praise be to Allah, we praise Him and seek His help. Whoever Allah guides cannot be misled. And whoever He sets astray then there is none to guide him. I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah alone, with no partner."

Dhumad trembled and said, "Repeat these words to me." The Prophet ﷺ repeated the words.

Dhumad said, "By Allah, I have heard the words of soothsayers, magicians, and poets, but I have never heard the like of these words, which reached the depths of the sea. Give me your hand so I can pledge my allegiance to you upon Islam."

The Prophet ﷺ extended his hand and Dhumad eventually cleansed his heart from disbelief, while saying, "I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the servant and Messenger of Allah."

The Prophet ﷺ also realised that he was a noble man among his people, so he said to him, "And your people?" meaning, will you call them to Islam?

Dhumad said, "Yes, and my people." He then returned to his people as a preacher and a caller to faith.

Hence, be an expert listener. Listen attentively. Move your head to indicate you are following the conversation. React by demonstrating facial expressions, like furrowing your forehead, raising your eyebrows, smiling, or moving your lips in surprise.

Notice how it affects the person who is addressing you, be he young or old. You will find that he focuses on you even more.

Result...

Our expertise in listening attentively to others makes them profound in their love for us.

(86)

The art of discussion

You must have a memory of a meeting you may have had with a friend where the two of you angrily argued, after which you were left bitter and angry for days. Perhaps, you might also recall an argument you saw between two people, perhaps over a trivial issue, where the two of them raised voices in anger, after which they were left resenting one another.

Sometimes we tire ourselves by winning people over by using various skills only to then alienate them from ourselves by behaving inappropriately. This is often caused by the lack of expertise in discussion and argumentation.

The debater is like a rock-climber. It is important that he is careful where he places his hands and feet. You will find that a rock-climber will first look at the rock he wishes to hold on to. He examines it fully and thinks whether or not it would withstand his weight before grabbing hold of it. He does the same with the rock he wishes to place his foot upon. When he wants to move his foot away from one rock to another, he carefully examines the stone before lifting his foot, in case he makes a mistake and falls.

I would not make a discussion or debate long. Rather, I would

keep it concise and precise. It is not admirable to become engaged in a discussion or an argument. Perhaps you may even agree with me that more than 90% of the arguments are not beneficial. Try to avoid argumentation as much as possible. Do not be angry if someone criticises you and tries to argue with you. Relax as much as you can and do not upset yourself contemplating the intention of the one who criticises you, thinking, "What does he want? Why did he embarrass me in front of others?" Do not kill yourself with anxiety. Deal with the situation calmly. Winds only blow away small rocks - and you are a mountain!

When the Prophet ﷺ came to Makkah as a conqueror after the Quraysh had nullified their treaty with him, the Prophet ﷺ had prayed to Allah to blind the Quraysh from noticing him so that he could attack them in surprise when they were unaware.

When the Prophet ﷺ headed towards Makkah, he stopped over at a nearby place whilst the Quraysh had no knowledge of it. But they were nonetheless on the lookout for him.

That same night, Abu Sufyan along with some of his companions went out on a reconnaissance mission, as the Prophet ﷺ waited for dawn to break so that he could attack the Quraysh.

When al-'Abbas – may Allah be pleased with him – saw this, he said, "O for the morning that Quraysh are going to witness! By Allah, if the Messenger of Allah enters Makkah by force before they come to him to seek his protection, the Quraysh will be destroyed forever!"

Al-'Abbas went to the Prophet ﷺ and sought his permission to leave, and the Prophet ﷺ granted him it. Al-'Abbas mounted on the Prophet's white mule and left.

Abu Sufyan along with his companions meanwhile came closer to the camp of the Prophet ﷺ, unaware that the army actually belonged to the Prophet ﷺ. As he looked at the fires that the Muslims had lit, he said, "I have never seen such huge fires lit, nor an army as huge as this. How great it is! I wonder who they are?"

One of his companions said, "This is, by Allah, the Khuza'ah tribe, and they are excited about war!"

Abu Sufyan replied, "Khuza'ah is too feeble and too small in number to have this many fires lit and to have such a huge encampment."

Abu Sufyan got closer and closer to the camp, until he fell into the hands of a group of Muslim guards who captured him and decided to take him to the Prophet ﷺ.

Meanwhile, as al-'Abbas was riding his mule, he saw Abu Sufyan and his companions who had just been captured by the Muslim horsemen. Abu Sufyan came forward frightened and began to follow al-'Abbas as his followers followed after him, being guarded by the Muslim horsemen from behind.

Al-'Abbas moved swiftly with Abu Sufyan to see the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and each time they passed by a fire, the Muslims asked, "Who is this person?" When they saw al-'Abbas mounted on the Prophet's mule, they said, "It is the uncle of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ on his mule."

Al-'Abbas continued to move on in a hurry in case anyone spotted Abu Sufyan, until they passed by 'Umar bin al-Khattab's fire. He said, "Who is this person?" as he got up to see for himself. When he noticed Abu Sufyan on the back of the horse, he

screamed, "Abu Sufyan! The enemy of Allah! Praise be to Allah who landed you in our hands without there being any pact or treaty!"

However, al-'Abbas prevented him from harming Abu Sufyan. 'Umar hurriedly made his way to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, as did al-'Abbas who eventually arrived before 'Umar. He jumped off the mule and ran to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. 'Umar followed closely behind and said, "O Messenger of Allah! This is Abu Sufyan! Allah has landed him into our hands without any pact or treaty! Allow me to strike his neck!"

Abu Sufyan had harmed the Muslims much. He was the leader of the pagans in the battle of Uhud and Ahzab. He was known for oppressing, killing and torturing the Muslims. Yet, here he was, finally captured by the Muslims!

Al-'Abbas said, "O Messenger of Allah, I have granted him security."

Al-'Abbas then sat down and began to whisper something in the Prophet's ears, whilst 'Umar kept saying, "O Messenger of Allah! Strike off his neck!"

When 'Umar persisted, al-'Abbas turned to him and said, 'Take it easy, O 'Umar! If he was from the men of Banu 'Adiy bin Ka'b, you wouldn't have suggested that!" Meaning, if he was from your relatives, you would not have suggested what you did, but since you knew that he was from Banu 'Abd Manaf, you had no qualms about suggesting what you did.

'Umar realised that he was about to enter into a dispute which they could ill afford to have at this stage. Moreover, what benefit was there in even bothering to discuss the absurd notion

that if the person was from Banu Ka‘b he would have been eager for him to accept Islam whereas if he wasn’t from them then he would not have been as eager?

‘Umar said very calmly, “Take it easy, O ‘Abbas! By Allah, the fact that you became a Muslim the day you did is more beloved to me than for my own grandfather to become a Muslim. This is because I know for a fact that your embracing Islam was more beloved to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ than his, if he were to do so.”

When al-‘Abbas heard this from ‘Umar, he fell silent and the discussion ended, even though, it was quite possible for ‘Umar to continue arguing by saying, “What do you mean?! Are you doubting my intention? Do you know what is in my heart? Why are you being tribalistic?” But he didn’t say any of this. They were all far above this to fall for the devil’s plot. Thereafter, ‘Umar and al-‘Abbas fell silent.

Meanwhile, Abu Sufyan was standing and waiting for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to pass a judgement concerning his case. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Take him with you, O ‘Abbas, to your tent, and bring him back to me in the morning.”

Al-‘Abbas took him to his tent where Abu Sufyan spent the night. When Abu Sufyan woke up the next morning and saw the people getting ready for the prayer and making ablution, he said to al-‘Abbas, “What is wrong with everyone?”

Al-‘Abbas said, “They have heard the call to prayer so they are getting ready to pray.”

When the time for prayer came, they lined up in rows and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ led them in prayer. When Abu Sufyan

saw them bowing as the Prophet ﷺ bowed and prostrating as the Prophet ﷺ prostrated, he was amazed at their obedience and compliance. When the prayer ended, al-'Abbas came to take Abu Sufyan to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

Abu Sufyan said, "O 'Abbas, do they comply with whatever he orders them to do?"

Al-'Abbas said, "Yes! By Allah, if he were to order them to forsake eating and drinking, they would!"

Abu Sufyan said, "O 'Abbas, I have never witnessed anything like what I did last night in my whole life, not even the kingdom of Casroes and Caesar!"

When al-'Abbas visited the Prophet ﷺ along with Abu Sufyan, the Prophet ﷺ said, "Woe be to you, O Abu Sufyan! Has the time not come for you to know that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah?"

The night that Abu Sufyan spent with the Muslims had had a profound effect in lessening his enmity towards the Muslims. He replied, "May my father and mother be sacrificed for you! How persevering and how generous of a relative you are! By Allah, I have now come to conclusion that if I had a god besides Allah, he would have helped me a bit!"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Woe be to you, O Abu Sufyan! Is it not time for you to acknowledge that I am the Messenger of Allah?"

Abu Sufyan expressed his view very openly, saying, "May my father and mother be sacrificed for you! How persevering and how generous of a relative you are! As for what you have just mentioned, then I still have doubts about it in my heart."

Al-'Abbas said to him, "Woe be to you, O Abu Sufyan! Accept Islam and testify that there is no one worthy of worship but Allah, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah!"

He remained silent for a while and then said, "I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship but Allah, and I also bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

The Prophet ﷺ was overjoyed.

Al-'Abbas said, "O Messenger of Allah, Abu Sufyan is a man who loves dignity. Please, offer something to him in reward."

The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Yes, whoever enters the house of Abu Sufyan is safe."

A thought...

Intelligence is not to win an argument, it is to avoid it.

(87)

Block the escape routes of the detractors

What creates ill feelings in the hearts of people for each other the most is the misuse of the tongue and the evil consequences that follow. This includes the hastiness on behalf of some to comment on someone's words as he speaks, or interrupting him without thinking twice, which only results in hostile argumentation and people harbouring ill feelings towards each other.

You will never be able to rectify all the people, teach them Islamic etiquettes, and train them in the skills of dealing with people. Let us go beyond the idealism which many become obsessed with when they say, "People are supposed to do this", or "People are supposed to get used to that..."

Stop thinking about this and just pray over the deceased who is in front of you, as they say. What I mean is that when we deal with people's mistakes, we should not busy ourselves thinking about what others should do, but rather, we should focus on what we should do. Whenever you wish to say something strange, some people may hastily comment on your words. It is important that you do not give them an opportunity to do so, by answering their questions before they even ask.

Some people can very effectively prevent a person from commenting without them realising it. I remember once an old man was sitting in a gathering talking about a particular incident he witnessed where two people were fighting at a petrol station, and how it became so serious that both taken to a police station. One of those present in the gathering, who was known to be very talkative, jumped up and began to relate his version of the story, saying, "Yes, that's right, but this is not what happened. What actually happened between the two was this, and so-and-so was at fault." He began to mention other details that did not even occur!

The old man turned to him, and I could see that he was about to explode. However, he controlled himself and quietly and calmly said, "Were you there at the incident?"

He said, "No."

The old man said, "Did anyone who witnessed it tell you about it?"

"No", he replied.

The old man said, "Did you read the incident report?"

He said, "No."

Thereupon, the old man screamed, "OK! So how can you say I am wrong when you don't know anything?"

What surprised me were his leading questions before he objected, for if he were to object before throwing those questions at him and thereby closing all the escape routes, the man would have found many avenues through which to flee, even if he had to lie.

Therefore, when we wish to establish certain facts, we need to precede them with preliminaries in order to convince our opponents before they get a chance to oppose them.

When the Quraysh marched forth to fight the Prophet ﷺ and his companions at Badr, some of the intelligent ones among them did not wish to fight. However, they had been compelled to march. The Prophet ﷺ found out about this and was sure that if they attended the battle, they would not fight the Muslims.

When he approached the battlefield, he wanted to inform his Companions about his decision regarding them and forbid them from killing them. He knew that some may have questions in their minds about his decision such as, "Why shouldn't we kill them when they have come out to fight us? Why did he exempt these people in particular?"

The Prophet ﷺ mentioned some preliminaries in order not to give them an opportunity to even think about the objections. How did he do so?

He stood among his Companions and said, "I have come to know that some men from Banu Hashim and others have been forced to come out. They do not want to fight us."

This was the first preliminary fact.

He then said, "Therefore, whoever of you meets anyone from Banu Hashim in the battle, then let him not kill him. Whoever sees Abu al-Bakhtari bin Hashim bin al-Harith bin Asad, then let him not kill him. Whoever sees al-'Abbas bin 'Abd al-Muttalib, the uncle of the Messenger of Allah, then let him not kill him, for they have been compelled to march."

The Companions agreed to comply and began to discuss this amongst their circles. Abu Hudhayfa bin 'Utbah bin Rabi'ah said, "Shall we kill our fathers, our sons and our brothers and spare al-'Abbas? By Allah, if I see him on the battlefield, I will strike him with my sword!"

His words reached the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He turned to "Umar and said, 'O Abu Hafs!"

'Umar said about this later, "By Allah, this was the first time ever the Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave me my nickname, Abu Hafs."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "O Abu Hafs! Will the face of the uncle of Allah's Messenger be struck with a sword?"

'Umar felt disgusted and angry, for how could Abu Hudhayfah have rejected the order of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ? Was he not a Muslim?

'Umar said at the top his voice, "O Messenger of Allah! Allow me to strike his neck with my sword! By Allah, he has become a hypocrite!"

Abu Hudhayfah – may Allah be pleased with him – thereafter regretted his words on that day and said, "I do not feel secure from the words I uttered that day. I will continue to be terrified of them unless martyrdom expiates for them." He was martyred on the day of Yamamah.

Advice...

Have them for lunch before they eat you for dinner!

(88)

Wait and do not interrupt!

I recall that once a lecturer was speaking about the art of discussion. During the lecture, he mentioned something from the story of Yusuf – peace be upon him. When he reached the verse, "And two young men went to prison with him. One of them said, 'I dreamed that I was pressing wine.' The other said, 'I dreamed that I was carrying upon my head bread whereof the birds were eating.'" he stared at the audience for a while in silence, and then said, "And two young men went to prison with him… which of them entered the prison first? Yusuf, or the young men?"

Someone from the audience shouted, "Yusuf!"

Another one said, "No! The two young men!"

A third person said, "No! It was Yusuf!"

A fourth person, who thought he was clever, said, "They all entered together!"

A fifth person then spoke, which caused such clamour that the original topic was completely forgotten! It seems that the lecturer did this quite deliberately. He began staring at the faces of the audience as time passed by. He then smiled, asked them to quieten down, and said, "What was the problem if one of them entered before the other? Does this issue require all this discus-

sion and argument?"

If we contemplate on our reality, we will find that we often become burdensome for others by interrupting them when they speak. Someone may be in the middle of relating an interesting story, only to be interrupted by another who would ruin the punch line in the story by commenting on something that does not even affect the main storyline.

Do not be burdensome on others by commenting on everything you hear. I remember once when my brother, Su'ud, was seven years old, he entered the mosque for the 'Isha prayer. It seemed as though he was in hurry and the Imam had been slightly late for leading the prayer.

When he could bear the wait no longer, he went towards the mu'adhin, who was an old man with hearing problems, and stood behind him. He then pinched his nose to alter his voice and said, "Give the iqamah", and ran away!

As soon as the mu'adhin heard this, he got up to say the Iqamah, but other attendees who were present stopped him and informed him of what happened. He sat down and began to look around in anger, hoping to see who the young boy was so that he could punish him.

This was a very odd incident, but this is not the reason I mentioned it. I only mentioned it because one day I was sitting in a gathering where someone mentioned this incident and said, "Su'ud was in a hurry because he wanted to go to the sea with his father..." knowing that Riyadh is in the middle of a desert and not by the sea. I began to think, shall I ruin his story by commenting, or is this piece of information not important enough to affect

the story? Should I therefore not comment and thereby avoid making an enemy? I chose this option and remained silent.

Sometimes you may comment on something without any comprehension. The person you may be criticising may have an excuse.

Ziyad is a very kind person who is always eager to advise others. One day he stopped at a traffic light and noticed the sound of Western music. He wondered where the sound was coming from. He looked around and noticed that the sound was coming from the car next to him. The person in the car had turned the volume up so much that anyone from near or far could hear the music.

Ziyad began to horn in order to attract his attention so that he could ask him to turn the volume down. But the person didn't respond at all. Perhaps, he was so drowned in the sound that he didn't realise what was going around him. Ziyad tried to see the face of the driver since the side of his face was covered with a headscarf. After trying hard, he finally saw it and found that he had a thick, bushy beard!

He was amazed to see a person with a beard who was listening to loud music instead of the Qur'an!

The lights turned green and the cars moved. Ziyad was eager to advise him, so he started following him. The man stopped his car outside a shop to buy something. Ziyad stopped his car behind it and looked at the man to discover that he even wore his garment above his ankles, whilst his beard filled his face. Various strange thoughts began to rush into his mind, and he thought that the man would probably emerge from the shop with a pack-

et of cigarettes. But the man came out with an Islamic magazine in his hand.

Ziyad could bear it no longer, so he gently called to the man, “Dear brother! Excuse me!” The person did not respond or even turn around.

Ziyad raised his voice slightly and said, “Brother! Brother! Excuse me! Brother, please listen!”

The man went to his car and sat inside without turning around to Ziyad.

Ziyad furiously got out of his car, went up to the man and said, “Dear brother! May Allah guide you! Can you not hear me?”

The man looked at him with a smile and turned his car on, and as soon as he did so, the cassette player turned on playing loud music. Ziyad was livid. “Dear brother! This is Haram! You are annoying everyone!”

The man began to smile even more whilst the music was playing extremely loudly, which made Ziyad all the more angry. His face turned red and he began to shout. When the man noticed that the situation was getting worse, he began to point to his ears. He then took out a pocket notebook, the first page of which stated, “I am deaf. I am unable to hear. Please, write your message.”

A general view...

Allah has said, “Man is hasty”. Be careful not to allow your hastiness to overtake your thoughtfulness.

(89)

Charity before consultation

Great demands require great preparations before making such demands in order to avoid refusal. This generally applies to requests of all types, be they spoken or written. If you were to write to an affluent person with a request, it would be appropriate for you to begin with some flattery, praising his generosity, kindness and his love for good, and then stating your request. Similarly, if you would like to make a request of your father, brother, or even your wife, it would always be appropriate to precede it with some preliminaries.

For example, if you were to call a group of friends over for dinner and wanted to request from your wife that she cooks and cleans the house, it would be appropriate if you begin by saying, "Your food is truly delicious! All of my friends would be delighted if I call them over to eat the dinner you prepare. Can you believe it? I have eaten in all the grand restaurants, but none of the dishes there compare to your cooking! Yesterday I met a friend of mine who has just returned from his travels, so I asked him out of courtesy to come and have dinner with us, but he surprised me by accepting the invitation! So I decided to call some friends over with him too. I really hope you can cook for us all."

This would be much better than for you to enter the house

screaming, "O so-and-so!"

"Yes, I am coming!" she would say, thinking that you are asking her to go out with you for entertainment.

But instead, you say to her, "Hurry up! Go to the kitchen! I have some friends coming over! Don't delay!"

The same rules apply if you wish to ask your manager for some time off, or make a request to your parents for something.

I have come across various incidents in the life of the Prophet ﷺ that are indicative of that. When the Prophet ﷺ was a child, was raised near the dwellings of the Hawazin tribe. He therefore wished for them to accept Islam. However, it reached him that Hawazin had gathered their forces and were preparing to fight him. So the Prophet ﷺ fought them, and Allah bestowed him with victory and booty.

Some of the people of Hawazin then approached the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, as he stopped over at Ji'ranah. Some people had been killed from Hawazin just as some Muslims had also been killed as a result of the battle. The Prophet ﷺ had placed their women and children in an isolated location. The intelligent ones from the Hawazin tribe decided to speak to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to persuade him to release the women and children. To this end they chose an eloquent diplomat from amongst them to speak to the Prophet ﷺ. Therefore, a man from Hawazin by the name of, Zuhayr Abu Surad stood up and said, "O Prophet of Allah, the captives in the wards of your army are in fact your relatives. Among them are your paternal and maternal aunts as well as your nurse-mothers who held you in their arms as a

baby. Had our women played similar roles to al-Harith bin Abu Shimr, or to al-Nu'man bin al-Mundhir, and had any of these kings inflicted upon us what you have inflicted, then they would have granted every request of ours if we had asked for their mercy and compassion and reminded them of their obligation. You, on the other hand, are the most merciful and compassionate man and the least needful of being reminded of your obligations." He then recited some verses of poetry, and subsequently, the Prophet ﷺ let the women and children free.

Contemplate on how the man began by mentioning some preliminary facts before presenting his request. He reminded the Messenger of Allah ﷺ of his childhood days in the dwellings of Hawazin Banu Sa'd. He then kindled generosity in the heart of the Prophet ﷺ by saying that if any of the kings were to be have generous towards them, then that indeed would have been generosity, but the Prophet ﷺ, on the other hand was the most generous of all people. How beautifully he worded his request!

Allah has taught the believers the appropriate etiquettes when he said, "O you who believe, when you consult the Messenger, offer something in charity before your consultation."

Whenever the Arabs wanted to seek help or aid from someone, they would always begin by mentioning good words and poems. Likewise, when they wanted to disgrace or fight someone, they would begin with lectures and poems, for words have an impact on the soul which swords cannot.

When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ wanted to perform 'Umrah, the Quraysh became frightened, and the Prophet ﷺ would have fought them if it wasn't for the fact that the Quraysh requested

that he sign a ten-year peace treaty with them. The conflict subsequently stopped.

One of the conditions stipulated in the treaty was that whichever of the tribes that wished to enter into allegiance with Muhammad ﷺ could do so, and those that wished to enter into the allegiance of Quraysh could do so. The Khuza'ah tribe decided to enter into allegiance with the Prophet ﷺ, whilst the Banu Bakr tribe decided to enter into allegiance with Quraysh. These two tribes had a history of bad blood and fighting. The malice Quraysh had for Khuza'ah increased, but they feared that if they did any harm to them, the Prophet ﷺ would aid their cause.

When about seventeen or eighteen months had passed after the treaty of Hudaybiyah, Banu Bakr attacked Khuza'ah at night in a place called al-Wateer, which is close to Makkah. They had sought help from the Quraysh. The Quraysh said, "Muhammad will never get to know about this, as no one will be able to recognise us at night." The Quraysh thus decided to help them with men and weapons, and to fight alongside them.

Khuza'ah was taken by surprise and many of their men, women and children were killed. When a man from amongst them, 'Amr bin Salim, saw what had happened to his people, he got on his camel, escaped from the Quraysh and sped to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He entered Madinah terrified and defeated. He approached the mosque with visible signs of the long journey he had undertaken. He stood in front of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and recited some words of poetry, wherein he asked the Prophet ﷺ to help his people against Quraysh who had violated the treaty by killing his people at night, whilst some were praying.

When the Prophet ﷺ heard the words of poetry, he became enraged and said, "Victory is yours, O 'Amr bin Salim!" He then got up and ordered the Muslims to make preparations for battle. They were taken by surprise as they didn't know where the battle would be. The Prophet ﷺ did not want to disclose its whereabouts in case news of it reached the Quraysh. He prayed to Allah that He blind the Quraysh from the Muslims' plans so they could be attacked by surprise in their dwellings. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was enraged over Quraysh's violation of the treaty. He said, as he was preparing for the battle, "You will see that Abu Sufyan will come and request us to respect the treaty and even increase its duration!"

Another group of people from Khuza'ah came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, amongst them Badeel bin Warqah, and informed the Messenger of Allah ﷺ of what had befallen them, and how the Quraysh had taken sides with Banu Bakr against them. The Prophet ﷺ gave them his word that he would help them and said, "Go back and disperse in various towns." He said this as he feared that the Quraysh may find out about his interaction with them and decide to fight them before the Prophet ﷺ could even reach them.

They turned back to return to their cities and on their way they met Abu Sufyan at a place between Makkah and Madinah called 'Asfan. Quraysh had sent Abu Sufyan to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to renew the treaty that was signed at Hudaybiyah and to increase its duration. They feared that the news of their misdeeds may have reached the Prophet ﷺ.

When Abu Sufyan met Badeel bin Warqah on the way, he

feared that he may have come from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ after having informed him of Quraysh's treachery.

He said, "Where are you coming from, O Badeel?"

Badeel replied, "I went to Khuza'ah from such and such a valley."

Abu Sufyan remained silent. When Badeel moved on, Abu Sufyan came to the place where Badeel had rested his camel and examined the animal dung to notice a date seed therein. From this he knew that the camel had been to Madinah, for the people there feed their camels date seeds. Abu Sufyan said, "I swear by Allah, Badeel has seen Muhammad!"

Abu Sufyan then went ahead until he reached Madinah. He headed for the house of his daughter, Umm Habibah, a wife of Allah's Messenger ﷺ. When he entered, he decided to sit on the mattress of Allah's Messenger ﷺ, but she snatched it away and folded it up.

He said, "Dear daughter, I do not know whether you think I am too good for the carpet or the carpet is too good for me?"

She replied, "It is the mattress of Allah's Messenger and you are an unclean pagan. I do not want you to sit on his mattress."

Abu Sufyan became surprised and said, "Evil has touched you since you left me!"

Abu Sufyan then went to the Prophet ﷺ and said, "O Muhammad, renew the pact and increase its duration."

The Prophet ﷺ asked, "Is this the reason why you have come? Has something happened from your side?"

The Prophet ﷺ did not want to show him that he knew about their treachery, or that he knew about their attack on Khuza'ah. It was as if he was saying to Abu Sufyan, "Why do you want to renew the treaty and increase its duration? Do we not already have a treaty in place? Why the need to renew it or increase its duration?"

Abu Sufyan replied, "Allah's refuge is sought! We are still abiding by our pledge and treaty that we signed on the day of Hudaybiyah. We will not change our stance concerning the treaty."

The Prophet ﷺ remained silent. Abu Sufyan asked him repeatedly, but Allah's Messenger refused to give him any response.

Abu Sufyan then left Allah's Messenger and went to Abu Bakr. He said, "Please, intercede on my behalf with Muhammad. Ask him to renew the treaty and increase the duration, or defend me and my people!"

Abu Bakr replied, "I am with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. I will not defend anyone against him. As for my view, then by Allah, if I were to find small ants fighting against you, then I would help them in their fight!"

Abu Sufyan left Abu Bakr disappointed and went to 'Umar bin al-Khattab to speak to him about the issue. 'Umar said in response, "You want me to intercede for you with the Messenger of Allah? Never! Rather, whatever new there was in the treaty, Allah has already caused it to expire, and whatever originally existed in the treaty, Allah has cancelled it, and whatever of the treaty was violated, then may Allah never undo the violation!"

When Abu Sufyan heard this, his complexion changed and he

felt humiliated, as if he had been slapped. Abu Sufyan left 'Umar thinking he had been betrayed by his relative. When he had lost hope in those whom he had just visited, he turned to 'Ali – may Allah be pleased with him –and said, "Dear 'Ali, you are the closest of them to me in terms of relations. Please, intercede for me with Allah's Messenger."

'Ali said in response, "O Abu Sufyan, none of the Companions of Allah's Messenger has the ability to protect anyone from him!" Meaning, no one is able to protect someone when Allah's Messenger has already decided to fight or punish him, since he does not speak whimsically. 'Ali continued, "You are the leader of Quraysh and the most noble of them. You are very capable of protecting yourself, so protect yourself and your family." Meaning, shout out to the people that I give protection to myself, and then go back to where you came from!

Abu Sufyan said, "Do you think this would be of any benefit to me?"

'Ali replied, "No, but this is just my opinion."

Thus, Abu Sufyan went out and shouted, "I have given myself protection amongst the people! By Allah, I do not think I need anyone to guard me!" He then mounted his camel and set off for Makkah.

When he met with the Quraysh, they asked him, "What happened? Did you come with any kind of agreement or treaty with Muhammad?"

He said, "No, by Allah, he refused to respond to me. I tried to speak to his followers but I have never seen a people as obedient to their king as they were to their leader! I went to Muhammad

and spoke to him, and by Allah, he wouldn't answer. I then approached Ibn Abi Quhafah, and by Allah I did not find any good in him. I then went to 'Umar and found him to be an avowed enemy. I then went to 'Ali and found him to be the gentlest of all of them. He asked me to do something, and I complied, but I do not know if it will be of any benefit to me or not!"

They said, "What did he ask you to do?"

He said, "He asked me to give myself protection openly in public, and I complied."

They said, "Did Muhammad accept that?" Meaning, did Muhammad acknowledge the protection you gave to yourself and order his followers to respect that?

He said, "No."

They said, "Woe be to you! He did no more than play with you! None of what you have said is of any benefit to us!"

He said, "By Allah, I could not have done any more than this."

Abu Sufyan was overcome by grief. He visited his wife and informed her of what had happened. She said, "May Allah disfigure the face of this feeble envoy! You haven't come with any good news!"

It wasn't long after that Allah's Messenger entered Makkah as a conqueror.

A gesture is enough to understand...

A large morsel of food requires much chewing before swallowing.

(90)

It is not important to always be successful

Fahd was once with his friend, who was very proud and arrogant, in a remote desert when suddenly their eyes fell on something black on the ground. The blowing wind would sometimes conceal it and then it would become visible again.

Fahd turned to his friend and said, "Any idea what this is?"

The friend said, "It is a black goat!"

Fahd said, "I think it is a crow."

The friend said, "I am telling you, it is a goat."

Fahd said, "OK, let's get closer and see what it is."

As they came closer, their eyes became more focused on the object, until it became clear that it was a crow.

Fahd said, "Brother, by Allah, this is a crow!"

The friend shook his head negatively and said, "It is a goat!"

Fahd remained silent. As they came closer to it, the crow became aware of their approach and flew away.

Fahd screamed, "Allahu Akbar! A crow! You see? It was a crow and it flew!"

The friend said, "It is a goat, even if it flew!"

Why did I mention this story? I mentioned it to make the point that all the skills I have mentioned so far only apply to the people in general. However, there are always some people, no matter how many skills you try with them, who will never respond positively.

If you were to try the skill of flattery and say, "MashaAllah! How beautiful are your clothes! You look as if you are a groom today!", and expect him to smile and thank you for your kindness, he would not react positively to you. Rather, he would look askance at you and say, "OK, OK, don't be so kind, and don't be so light-hearted" and similar dull words which only underline his lack of expertise in dealing with others.

Similarly, a woman may test some of these skills with her husband by relating a joke, but the husband may react negatively and say, "OK! Don't force yourself to laugh!"

If you ever come across such people, then keep in mind that they do not represent the whole of society, for I have experimented with these skills myself. Yes, by Allah, I have tried these skills myself and seen the results on people, young and old, simpletons and intelligent, the aristocrat and my students at university. I have tried these skills with my own children and have witnessed amazing results. In fact, I have tried these skills on people of different races and nationalities and seen positive results, and I say all of this as a sincere advisor to you.

In short...

Are you serious about change?

(91)

Be brave and start from now!

I recall that once I delivered a course on the skills of dealing with people, and there was a man known as 'Abd al-'Aziz in the audience. He was noticeably affected by the course, since he was taking down notes on every minor point. The three days of the course went by and we all went home. After a month I was delivering the same course again, and as I looked at the audience, I saw 'Abd al-'Aziz sitting in the first row!

I became surprised and thought, why does he want to attend the course for a second time? Surely, he knows I am only going to repeat myself!

When the Adhan was given and the students went out of the lecture hall, I took the hand of 'Abd al-'Aziz, walked along with him and said, "'Abd al-'Aziz, what made you attend for the second time? You know I am only going to repeat myself. The notes you have in your hands are the same as those given to you the last time. The certificate you will receive is exactly the same as the certificate you received last time!" Meaning, you wouldn't benefit anymore than taht.

He said to me, "Believe me, my friends are saying to me, " 'Abd al-'Aziz! You have changed the way you deal with us in the

past month!

I thought about it and realised that I am only practising the skills I had learnt in the previous course. So I came back to attend the course once again to fortify the skills I had learnt previously."

Therefore...

If you seriously want a change, then begin right now!

استمتع بحياتك

(باللغة الإنجليزية)

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This is an exquisite collection of incidents from the life of the Prophet ﷺ, stories from our Islamic Heritage, and thought-provoking anecdotes from the life of the author. The aim of the book is to train the reader to enjoy living his life by practicing various self-development and inter-personal skills. What is so compelling and inspiring about this book is that, in order to highlight the benefit of using social skills, the author draws from the lives of the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions ﷺ.

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